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THE NATION

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INDOCHINA
A SLAUGHTER OF INNOCENTS
Sen. Edward M. Kennedy

GETTING OUR WAY IN VIETNAM
The Political Economy of War Douglas Dowd
Offshore Oil Sweepstakes Michael Tanzer

Politics of Illusion
THE WELFARE-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX
Murray Gruber

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LETTERS

eye opener for Kansas

Washington, D.C.

DEAR SIRS: I congratulate Randy Brown and *The Nation* for writing and publishing "The AEC Has Something for Kansas" [June 7]. It is a first-class, well-balanced and most informative article. I suspect that Dr. Seaborg may not join in these plaudits, but not because he can charge *The Nation* with any distortion.

Mr. Brown has compressed into a relatively brief and eminently readable piece a tremendous amount of fact that will open a lot of eyes and make many people think.

Rep. Joe Skubitz (R., Kans.)

fighting back

Garden City, N.Y.

DEAR SIRS: With due apologies, I must agree with one theme in Charles Lam Markmann's review of my book, *Civil Liberties* [*The Nation*, Apr. 19]. My style may be burdensome to the general reader. After all, it is difficult to transcend the tools of one's trade. Nevertheless, I did not think my ideas, however crudely formulated, could be so grossly misconstrued.

I did not pretend I was writing another manifesto for civil liberties and against suppression. Heaven knows, enough people have and will continue to satisfy that need. However, I assumed that my libertarian credentials would seep through. My devotion to all freedoms and to the American Civil Liberties Union is hardly as long-standing as Markmann's and perhaps not as intense, but, as far as I can estimate, it is completely genuine, and nothing in the book seems in violation of my credo. . . .

In general, Markmann seems out to peg me politically, casually lumping my ideas with those of several other specific people. Sorry buddy, you got me all wrong. Most amazing, and most symbolic, is my presumed identification with John Roche. Not only did I explicitly criticize Roche's approach, but much of the book can be considered a low-keyed polemic against it. Roche asserts that civil liberties in contemporary America are fairly secure because of nationalized politics and impersonal administration and justice. My emphasis is on the possibility of self-protection for those who are the objects of suppression.

The same formulation probably constitutes the essence of my disagreement with Markmann, which is more than a dispute about the quality of my book. In his generally admirable history of the American Civil Liberties Union, *The Noblest Cry*, his "elitist" orientation shows up at many points. The dedicated man of principle is always pitted against the crude mob. In contrast, I see civil liberties resting on the possibilities of "pluralistic conflict," both the humble and noble defending *their* rights, for whatever reasons, against those who would take them away. . . .

To bring the discussion up to date, one of the reasons I am not as apprehensive about the possible erosions of freedoms as some think I should be is that victims are fighting back. . . . [The] aggressive response to political prosecutions and legislative investigations is of another order than the cowed reactions of the early 1950s. . . . [That] behavior does represent a form of "pluralistic conflict" which, for the immediate period at least, helps maintain civil liberties.

William Spinrad

correction

A typographical error has changed the meaning of one sentence in Leslie Armour's "Aliens in Their Own Land" (*The Nation*; June 14). It appears in the second column of page 751, and should read: "But not one was hired (one was offered a job)."

The Editors

EDITORIALS

The Big Leak

The finest public service Robert S. McNamara performed during his years as Secretary of Defense was to order the massive study of how we became involved in the war in Vietnam. It is significant that the official directly charged with responsibility for waging that war apparently had serious doubts about how we had become involved in it. *The New York Times* is to be congratulated on publishing portions of this 7,000-page report, and whoever leaked the material to the *Times* deserves thanks.

The importance of the material is primarily historical and political. On the three main subjects covered in the published portions—the buildup to the Gulf of Tonkin incident (and resolution), the plotting and planning that preceded the air raids to the north, and the similar plotting and planning that preceded the decision to send in American ground combat troops—there is little that will surprise readers of *The Nation*. Using inference, conjecture, and the best information we could assemble, we gave our readers what we now know was the truth about these developments as they occurred.

At the same time, the material provides a wealth of precise detail and reveals with skill and candor how "one thing led to another" until Washington found itself engaged in a war which it could not win and did not know how to terminate. The portions published thus far do not, of course, tell the full story. Mid-1968 is the cutoff date and much has happened since then. But the documents and analysis give enough of the story to shake the confidence of all those who have insisted on believing what they have been told about this war by the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon Administrations. Instead of being closed, the credibility gap has now been widened. The most telling aspect of the documentation is that it shows exactly how far the Johnson administration went to deceive the public and the Congress and how hard it tried, with a fair measure of success, to deceive the press, thus using the latter as the carrier of the other deceptions. The political impact should be profound.

Publication of this material, which neither the President, nor Messrs. Rogers and Kissinger had seen, gave the Administration a fine chance to unburden itself of this war, if it had been seeking a political reason for such action.

But instead of taking some such avenue of escape, the Administration has elected to suppress the report and the additional material and thereby, in effect, to censor *The New York Times*. Whatever happens in the courts, the attempt to suppress the material is certain to fail; the rest of the report will "leak" in due course and the entire report will be published, if not by *The Times*, then by other publications. The Administration is also apparently determined to identify and punish whoever it was who gave the report to the paper, but that will not be an easy task, if only because that person will be something of a public hero.

Nor will it be easy to make a case against *The Times*. The material published is three years old. To be sure, it is embarrassing—even humiliating—but from a security point of view it is harmless. Senator Mansfield is "de-

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lighted" the material was published and Sen. Hugh Scott finds it "very instructive."

The report warrants detailed analysis but this week we shall merely call attention to some of the nuggets it contains. The predominant American interest in Vietnam, at the start, was to contain commmunism, but this soon shifted to the defense of the power and prestige of the United States. The decision makers first wanted to bomb the North because of their fear—well-founded—that the South Vietnam regime might collapse; they then continued the bombing out of fear that a neutralist regime might come to power in the South. The Johnson administration was firmly convinced that Hanoi was the source of the insurgency, despite intelligence reports that the primary sources of Communist strength in the South were indigenous—precisely what critics of the war had contended from the outset. The President and his civilian advisers were convinced that bombing the North would bring the North Vietnamese to their knees in short order; the intelligence and military advisers did not agree.

The people of South Vietnam do not appear to have been of much concern to any of the advisers, civilian or military, at any time. Our prestige as a nation was more important than their welfare or their desire for self-determination (if such a desire existed). The harsh language used by Gen. Maxwell Taylor in dressing down the so-called Young Turks in the South Vietnamese army shows a contempt for them that the General doubtless felt for their countrymen. The rhetoric is revealing throughout. Mr. McNaughton's "fast/full squeeze" versus "slow squeeze," as proposed bombing alternatives, suggests the lack of sensitivity to the human consequences of the action. Rostow's language is often incomprehensible: "we must begin by fastening our minds as sharply as we can around our appreciation of the view in Hanoi," etc. All that can be said in defense of President Johnson after reading this material is that he was grotesquely ill-advised. But he needed no advice on how to deceive the public, the press, and the Congress—even on such a crucially important issue as sending in U.S. ground combat troops. The President knew perfectly well that to halt ground troop involvement would be a far more difficult task than calling off air or naval action, or so-called "covert" activities.

Under the circumstances, Congress would now seem to have no alternative but to order a full-scale investigation of our involvement in Vietnam. In the meantime, the evidence indicates that, in one form or another, the war will continue as long as Mr. Nixon is in office. He is winding down the domestic political opposition by withdrawing U.S. combat troops, but is apparently prepared to finance the slaughter of Asians by Asians in the hope of preserving an American military presence by proxy in Southeast Asia.

The Arms Harvest

From 1954 to 1965 we sold considerable quantities of weapons to West Pakistan, including forty-eight light tanks and sixteen Sabrejet aircraft. When hostilities broke out between West Pakistan and India, we embargoed further shipments. In 1967, however, the embargo was eased to permit West Pakistan to buy spare parts and ammunition for the weapons we had furnished. All the evidence at

IN THIS ISSUE

June 28, 1971

EDITORIALS

802

ARTICLES

806 Indochina: A Slaughter of Innocents — *Sen. Edward M. Kennedy*

808 Politics of Illusion: The Welfare-Industrial Complex — *Murray Gruber*

811 Getting Our Way in Vietnam: The Political Economy of War — *Douglas F. Dowd*

814 Offshore Oil Sweepstakes — *Michael Tanzer*

815 The Bloody Surgery of Pakistan — *Aijaz Ahmad*

819 Congress: A Family Business — *Joseph Volz*

BOOKS & THE ARTS

821 Latham: Crazy Sundays — *William Hughes*

823 Gilman: Common and Uncommon Masks — *Foster Hirsch*

824 Atwood: Procedures for Underground
The Journals of Susanna Moodie
The Animals in That Country
The Circle Game — *Rosellen Brown*

826 Dreiser's Enduring Genius — *George H. Douglas*

827 Selfish Gathering (poem) — *Millen Brand*

828 Jong: Fruits & Vegetables — *Josephine Hendin*

828 Films — *Robert Hatch*

829 Theatre — *Harold Clurman*

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hand indicates that these weapons, and the auxiliary equipment more recently furnished, were used in the blood bath the West Pakistani army inflicted on East Pakistan when that colony—which it is in fact—had the temerity to vote overwhelmingly for a measure of independence (167 out of 169 seats assigned to East Pakistan in the 313-seat national assembly—which never met).

As the massacres and rapine were taking place, Washington looked the other way. True, we had not furnished all the arms; Chinese and Soviet weapons also saw action. But it was not until June 12 (more than two and a half months after the carnage began) that the State Department took public notice. Since the influx of refugees was causing serious disturbance in India, our State Department appealed to India and Pakistan to exercise restraint, and urged the Pakistanis to restore normal conditions in East Pakistan through "peaceful political accommodation."

The potential for further mischief in this region can hardly be exaggerated. East Pakistan was not 100 per cent Muslim. It contained some 10 million Hindus, many of whom would now prefer to live in India, where their misery and insecurity could scarcely be worse than in East Pakistan. There is reason to believe that the West Pakistani army is exerting pressure on these people, while also perpetrating mass murder on their own coreligionists.

In *The New York Times* of April 18, Chester Bowles urged that we lodge a strong protest with the West Pakistani Government over the misuse of U.S. military equipment and cut off all aid except medical supplies and food. He also urged United Nations intervention. In the U.S. Senate, Senators Church and Saxbe have introduced an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act that would suspend economic and military assistance to West Pakistan, pending establishment of an international relief agency to give aid to East Pakistan, and until the majority of East Pakistanis are repatriated.

How seriously this will be taken by the Nixon Administration remains to be seen. Unless relief action can be organized quickly and efficiently, and all the diverse interests and malignant hatreds of the region be at least temporarily allayed, the prospect for epidemics and famines in the future is nothing short of terrifying.

That Offshore Oil Story

When the first stories appeared about the possibility of oil resources in the waters off the South Vietnam coast (see "Offshore Oil Boom" by Barry Weisberg, *The Nation*, March 8), a prompt and well-orchestrated effort was made to counter them. Because a wire service had made a mistake in quoting estimates, *Time* commented that only "the farthest out, craziest Left" would believe such stuff. But on June 10 the Economics Ministry in Saigon announced that it would open bids for oil exploration on its continental shelf and hoped to earn $1 million a day from the activity. In addition to British, French, Italian companies, and a Japanese combine, eighteen American firms are in contention—thirty firms in all.

Last March the French commercial attaché proposed to the Thieu government that the French screen all bids and, in effect, oversee the entire operation. But *The New York Times* reports (June 11) that "Considerable pressure was applied by American oil representatives" to head off any such scheme. "One American oilman," to quote from the story, "said he had told Mr. Ngoc (Minister of Economics) that if the French achieved this control, his company, one of the world's most powerful, would suggest to Congressmen that they reduce or block all economic aid to South Vietnam. 'I let him know if he let the French do this, then he could damn well ask the French for economic aid as well because the Americans wouldn't come through with it,' the oil representative said." All of which adds pertinency to the article by Douglas Dowd and the editorial comment by Michael Tanzer (p. 811).

On March 17 and again on May 5, Rep. James Abourezk (D., S.D.) called for a Congressional investigation of American oil interests in South Vietnam's offshore oil. Since the bidding period will be restricted to sixty days, Mr. Abourezk points out (June 10) that any delay beyond that date will "place the whole question of American exploitation of South Vietnam offshore oil outside any possible Congressional review. If Congress is going to investigate this matter, this is the time to act."

Quislings: The New Meaning

Considering the eminence of his predecessor, Sen. Mike Gravel (D., Alas.) has been giving a pretty good account of himself. He inserted in the June 7th issue of the *Congressional Record* an article by Ward Just, "Decline in Viet Security Worries U.S. Command," which appeared in the June 6th *Washington Post*. The story, based on "meticulous investigation" by U.S. officials in the Mekong Delta, could have given little comfort to those who still pin their hopes on American victory via Vietnamization.

The delta is remote from North Vietnam, and enemy activity there may be presumed to be largely indigenous, yet American commanders on the scene are privately reporting "serious deterioration." Fifty-four allied bases and outposts were overrun in those four months, nearly double that of a year ago. The Vietcong captured seventy-nine radios, enough to equip ten battalions of troops; enough weapons to equip three main-force battalions, and large quantities of ammunition. They killed 327 defenders, wounded 170, and probably made off with a considerable proportion of the 146 missing.

But what has the U.S. advisers most worried is the assortment of causes which led to these disasters. In twenty-one cases, "traitors" were involved; in twenty-two, all the defenders, including the sentries, were asleep; in seven cases the defenders offered no resistance; twenty outposts were poorly fortified, and so on. The dramatic increase in "quislings" and sleeping sentries is especially disconcerting to the American "advisers." Let it be noted that our people have made an etymological invention: Quisling was a Norwegian who collaborated with the invaders of his country; but in South Vietnam you are a "quisling" if you *don't* collaborate. As for the sleeping sentries, one suspects that some of them may have been asleep by prearrangement. On the other side, "the allied investigation indicates that the enemy has lost none of its grit and passion for battle, nor its resourcefulness and willingness to fight at night."

These outposts were manned by Vietnamese militia or

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popular forces; one would expect that they provide a good measure of the extent to which the Americans have "won the hearts and minds of the people." For that matter, in the Laotian invasion, even elite ARVN units took such a beating that they were unfit for battle for months.

Mr. Gravel commented: "When one sees reports such as these, one begins to wonder what really is going on. As the polls indicate, there is not much credibility left in this nation with respect to public officials, or, for that matter, the President himself." That would seem to include Vietnamization, which may turn out to be as big a bust as all the preceding talismans.

Wedding Present

Mr. Nixon let it be widely known that he wished to spare his daughter Tricia "the glare of merciless publicity" on the occasion of her marriage to Edward Cox. To that end, he provided her with the Rose Garden of the White House for the ceremony, musical groups from the bands of all the armed services, a 7-foot-high wedding cake and a guest list calculated to make news photographers defy fire and flood.

The one person in all Washington who appeared to take the President's anxiety seriously was Col. Howard Cox, father of the groom. He kept monkeying with his announced timetable, snapped impatiently at reporters and behaved in general like a man who genuinely respected the right to privacy. Needless to say, his efforts were unavailing, for everyone else perfectly understood that the Presidential family was cursing the floodlights with the sincerity of a Kansas farmer cursing the spring rain.

It is not true, of course, that celebrities wish to avoid publicity (when she was in the White House, Jacqueline Kennedy's method of being inconspicuous was to be photographed on horseback for the cover of a news magazine). What celebrities want is constant publicity—of the right sort. Too often they get what they think is the wrong sort, and a wedding is thus a heaven-sent opportunity. As the *Daily News* noted in its headline, "Today Altars the Washington Mood"—a sorry pun, but right on the nose of what the White House was up to. The mood in Washington, in the country, is anything but happy these days. Tricia Nixon is a smart girl and a good daughter; she gave her father a lovely wedding present.

Civil Rights Ombudsman

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights was set up in 1957. None of the six Presidentially appointed members, still less the staff and its director, is satisfied with its accomplishments over those fourteen years. That, however, is not so much because of deficiencies in performance as because these are people not easily satisfied. Against forbidding odds, this Commission has done more for the civil rights movement than any other official body, and it has constantly lashed the government for its innumerable derelictions.

The Commission was set up as most federal commissions are—to quell an outcry and create the appearance of action, even while the appointing power hoped that a minimum of action would ensue. In this case the technique misfired. The Commission has done a good job, has consistently tried to do a better one, and is still trying. One reason for its balance of successes over failures is the chairman, Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame University. He has been a member from the beginning (appointed by President Eisenhower) and chairman since 1969. Father Hesburgh is one of the most formidable men of principle in public life, but he is interested in results and knows his way around in politics. He and Howard A. Glickstein, the staff director, complement each other. Since scant credit can be given to President Nixon in the civil rights field, it should be noted in fairness that he appointed Glickstein.

The history of the Commission, its achievements, its handicaps and its failures are contained in a compendious account by Jack Nelson, "The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: A More Activist Role?" Nelson is one of the most incisive and talented reporters in the business, and credit is due the *Los Angeles Times* for lending him to the Race Relations Information Center (P.O. Box 6156, Nashville, Tenn. 37212) for the preparation of this report.

One point Nelson makes—and it is crucial—is that the Commission limps along on a $3.5 million appropriation. Hesburgh says, "I've had four Presidents in a row tell me [civil rights] is the most important domestic problem facing the country." To show how much they meant it, and with the cooperation of Congress, they financed the Commission yearly to the extent of about the cost of one hour of the Indochinese war at its peak.

Money is not all the Commission needs. It should have tenure for, say, a ten-year term (the problem of race will not be solved in one decade). No commission can function without a high-quality staff and it is hard to hold good people, however dedicated, when the rug may be pulled from under the employing agency at any time.

Essentially the role of the Commission is that of an ombudsman on civil rights. Examples of the function abound. When the Attorney General was trying to evade his plain duty under the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the Commission went after him with hard words—polite language has little effect on Mr. Mitchell. The Commission is now similarly speaking out on the housing mess.

The basic difficulty shared by the President and the Attorney General is that they can neither flout the spirit and intent of the law (that would create political bedlam) nor enforce it without fear or favor (that would cost too many white votes). So they try to trim. Mr. Nixon's qualifications in this kind of legerdemain are not to be derided. He is fond of saying, "I have practiced some law myself," but in fact his principal law experience was to front for a big Wall Street firm. He is now trying to apply his talents as a fixer in the racial housing situation. The government will fight racial discrimination when a town is caught in *flagrante delicto,* as in the Blackjack, Mo., case, but there is to be no disturbance of suburban economic patterns. The Civil Rights Commission has exposed such Presidential deception. It has also charged the Federal Housing Administration with "abdicating its responsibility" by endorsing a new home-ownership program for low-income families that will simply repeat the old discriminatory patterns. Such well-timed statements and reports by an official agency alert civil rights groups to what is happening. We need more of it.

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Indochina: A Slaughter of Innocents

SEN. EDWARD M. KENNEDY
Because he has served since 1965 as chairman of the Subcommittee on Refugees, The Nation *asked Senator Kennedy to write this history and up-to-date appraisal of the fate that has befallen the civilian population of Vietnam.*

Washington

Despite an unending stream of optimistic rhetoric from our national leadership, the daily news from Indochina continues to tell the same old story: of spreading war and escalated bombing and continued fighting in a "people's war" that has now engulfed an entire region. It has become a war that one correspondent has rightly called "a slaughter of innocents."

From the beginning, the official word from Washington has grossly misled the nation on the tempo of the conflict, and disguised its continuing violence and widening character. Even today it ignores a deepening American involvement and further commitments. This rhetoric has tragically evaded genuine concern—let alone some responsibility—for the devastating effect the conflict has had on the civilian population and countryside of a vast region.

It is this latter point that I wish to emphasize here. For the war in Indochina not only continues to tear at America's national life and spirit—it also is heightening the agony of a rapidly growing number of civilians in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

We are faced today with a very serious regional crisis of people—millions of people—refugees, civilian casualties, war victims of all kinds. Each day of war produces more of them. In fact, nothing more accurately documents the continuing intensity and spread of the conflict, as well as the level of military operations, than the number of civilians killed or wounded or made refugees. By this measure one can see that the war is scarcely winding down for the peoples directly involved. And, more than our government cares to admit, American military activity—especially the unrestricted air war—is contributing heavily to this growing human toll.

In South Vietnam the problem of refugees and civilian casualties continues to fester. Despite official statements to the contrary, there is much to suggest that the basic situation has changed very little in recent years. In fact, adding heavily to a cumulative total of nearly 6 million, the monthly flow of refugees during the past several months has often been higher than at any time since the Tet offensive in 1968. The numbers include at least 40,000 Montagnards forcibly moved from their villages along the Laotian-Cambodian border, as well as at least 16,000 refugees created by yet another sweep through the My Lai area, and 40,000 refugees from military operations in the U Minh forest at the southern tip of South Vietnam.

The recent displacement of the Montagnards is especially tragic; it illustrates once again the old, bankrupt policy of forcing relocation for *our* strategic reasons, rather than for the interests of the people involved. Such uprootings have been suffered by countless villages and hamlets in South Vietnam—and in Laos as well. It has always been done in the name of bringing "security to the people," but with more emphasis on their "security" than on their welfare.

The scenario for such operations is drawn graphically in this memorandum, submitted recently to the Subcommittee on Refugees, which I have served as chairman since 1965. Written by an American refugee official in central Vietnam, the memorandum says:

> Each year the farce of "taking security to the hamlets" is blandly outlined in the official pacification and development plans—and each year no such thing happens. Instead, the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) shows a certain number of hamlets evaluated as "insecure." Some general then says Darlac Province will have no more low-rated hamlets. The province chief, knowing his forces are not about to take security to the hamlets, decides to bring them in under an "artillery umbrella," usually along one of the main roads in the province.
>
> At this point all Ministry of Social Welfare regulations are violated and a group of hamlets are moved in, presumably at "their own volition." But with no planning either for the move or adequate provisions for their health or welfare.

Dr. Gerald Hickey, an American anthropologist with nearly two decades of experience in Vietnam, calls these forced relocations "one of the unlearned lessons of the Vietnam War." In a memorandum written for the record he concludes, as many others have, that the "gains in population and resource control resulting from such relocation projects are, for the most part, outweighed by the social and economic disruptions that affect the whole of Vietnamese society. The ever growing number of shoddy settlements of Montagnards who have forcibly, or even willingly, been relocated is a stark reminder of this disruption."

As if the mounting numbers of refugees and forced relocation schemes were not enough cause for concern, civilian casualties in Vietnam have continued at a high level. In 1970, hospital admissions alone recorded nearly 51,000 civilian casualties. This official figure is misleading, however, because it omits civilian casualties treated elsewhere, those not treated at all, and those who are killed outright or die before reaching treatment facilities. If these additional numbers are added to hospital admissions, civilian casualties during 1970 probably will rise at least to 125,000, including some 25,000 to 35,000 deaths. The cumulative total of civilian casualties since 1965 numbers some 1,050,000, including at least 325,000 deaths.

Inevitably, tens of thousands of the civilian casualties who survive are physically disabled. Again, official statistics do not reflect the true picture, but as of late 1969, some 79,600 civilian amputees and paraplegics were registered with the Vietnamese Government, as well as some 25,600 civilians who have become blind or deaf from war causes. In addition, the official register lists some 258,000 orphans and some 131,000 war widows.

After more than a decade of war, the tragic human problem resulting from the conflict can no longer be isolated and neatly categorized for action as "refugee

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problems," "civilian casualties problems," "war victim problems," "orphan problems" (there are many more pigeonholes). For taken together, all of these problems combine into a massive and long-term social welfare and rehabilitation problem, involving literally millions of people and affecting the total population of South Vietnam. Sadly, the record offers little ground to believe that the shocking dimensions and depth of this situation are acknowledged either in Washington or Saigon.

A similar situation is fast developing in Laos. In mid-1968 the pendulum of the seesaw pattern of warfare swung wildly—and a marked escalation of the conflict began from which Laos and its people have still not recovered. A war characterized by officials in our government as a "relatively modest and low-profile conflict" has suddenly become a calamity of vast proportions.

The official American view of the escalation was given by the President on March 6, 1970. He suggested that the escalation resulted from a sudden aggressive move by North Vietnamese forces from Sam Neua Province into the Plain of Jars region. But the record—including testimony before the Subcommittee on Refugees as early as May of 1970—indicates a more complicated sequence, involving Americans as well as North Vietnamese.

Since early 1969 Laos has been the principal target of a "no holds barred" air war over Indochina. And we are now beginning to understand more fully than ever before —as recent hearings before the Subcommittee on Refugees document—the devastating impact that the air war, and the conflict generally, has had on the civilian population.

Out of a population of less than 3 million, at least 700,000 Laotians have become refugees. More than 300,000 are currently on relief rolls. Tens of thousands have fled from battle zones in recent weeks and months. Comprehensive data are not available—mainly because the problem has been ignored by our government, and questions raised by members of Congress and others have gone unanswered. However, conservative estimates from the beginning of the heavy air war over Laos in early 1969 put civilian casualties at more than 30,000, including as many as 10,000 deaths.

One of the greatest tragedies of the Indochinese war is the sad plight of the hill tribes in Laos, especially the Meos. Nearly the entire Meo population are refugees—either as civilians fleeing from battle, or as paramilitary forces taking refuge from defeat. The cost to the Meos for their service to our interest has been the decimation of their tribe. An internal USAID memorandum says, in part:

> We must recognize that, inasmuch as a great measure of the effectiveness of a military force lies in its fighting heart and its numbers, as well as leadership and equipment, the Meos and Lao Teung are no longer the military asset they were in the past—particularly when weighed against the cost of their support in dollars and in all the psychological, social, and humanitarian problems that develop from the manner in which they are employed.
>
> In other words, they have been used to the hilt and as many of them are expressing—they have had it!
>
> This situation requires a reassessment of our policies regarding the Meo and other hill tribes to the extent that humanitarian/economic factors may predominate over military considerations in charting our future courses of action regarding these peoples. We could, in

Drawing by Vo-Dinh, from "The Cry of Vietnam" by Thich Nhat Hanh (Unicorn Press)

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effect, give them a fond thanks for their services and cast them adrift to shift for themselves, faced with the spector of starvation and/or being absorbed (with increasingly bitter memories of our abandonment) into Communist dominated areas. This of course would not be humanitarian or strategically sound considering the U.S. objectives in Laos. . . .

This memorandum—and it is only one of many secured by the Subcommittee on Refugees—illustrates the cynicism which too often has characterized our government's policies and actions toward the civilian population of Indochina. Meanwhile, as the civilian toll rapidly mounts in Laos, the military situation deteriorates rapidly—despite the massive air war and billions of dollars being spent to support it.

In Cambodia, the bubble of official optimism has burst. Less than a year ago we were being told by the Vice President that the Cambodian invasion was "the finest hour" of this Administration—that it was a great military victory, serving to lighten America's military burden in Indochina by assisting the process of Vietnamization. What do we find today?

After only a year, instead of shortening the war, the invasion has helped to spread it into new areas. American planes have flown an increasing number of bombing sorties over Cambodia. Our military aid to Cambodia is on the increase. Foreign troops wander at will throughout the countryside. And the government in Phnom Penh controls less territory than ever before.

Inevitably, the familiar pattern of Vietnam and Laos is being repeated today in Cambodia—the destruction of the countryside, the generation of refugees, the occurrence of civilian casualties. Cambodia's Commissioner General for War Victims has recently estimated that some 700,000 persons have fled the countryside into Phnom Penh and a number of other cities controlled by government forces. He also estimates that civilian casualties total some 15,000, including 6,500 deaths. Most independent observers feel, however, that the true figure in each category is significantly higher.

The record is clear on where we stand in Indochina. By our use of the modern technology of war—by heavy bombing and extensive artillery support, by trying to do from the air and at a distance what we cannot do on the ground—we have over the years destroyed the very land and people we had set out to save.

The United States has dropped over Indochina nearly three times the tonnage of bombs that we dropped during all of World War II. Of the nearly 6 million tons of bombs used in Indochina, nearly half have fallen during the last two years alone—a tonnage equal to the explosive force of more than 100 Hiroshima-type atomic bombs.

In a speech in Boston more than three years ago, I said: "The kind of war we are fighting in Vietnam will not gain our long-range objectives; the pattern of destruction we are creating can only make a workable political future more difficult." I felt that "if the current policies relating to the nature of the war were not changed, and the assumptions underlying civilian programs not revised, then the prospects for Vietnam . . . were dim."

Just how dim we can now see. Each day brings new violence. Each day escalates the human costs for all involved. There are more refugees. There are more casualties, both military and civilian. There are more prisoners of war and more missing in action. And with each additional loss, Americans are reminded that our nation cannot allow the very dubious specter of a "blood bath" in the future to blind us to the "blood bath" that is going on today—every day—in Vietnam and all of Indochina. This "blood bath" will continue as long as the war continues—as long as efforts to end that war are avoided and delayed for whatever excuse.

The United States is great and powerful. And as the recent history of Indochina illustrates so well, we freely use our influence and power in many ways and for many ends. But the power to heal, to salvage, and rehabilitate the hapless victims of conflict—and the responsibility to minimize our contribution to the inevitable human toll of war—has never been exercised in a measure commensurate with the other uses of our power in South Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. There is much to be done for the war victims in Indochina. And there is much more our country must do to help. □

POLITICS OF ILLUSION

The Welfare-Industrial Complex

MURRAY GRUBER
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Dallas

During the week of May 16, some 3,500 professional social workers gathered in Dallas for their annual National Conference on Social Welfare. Among the speakers this year were Leonard Woodcock, Urban Coalition Chairman Sol M. Linowitz, newly elected Governor of Ohio John J. Gilligan, Jack Conway, president of Common Cause, and that old Social Democrat, Michael Harrington, pleading with the social workers not to conspire in the "socialization of private priorities."

But against the backdrop of divided cities, disastrously high unemployment, the folly of Southeast Asia, and the narrowing of parliamentary possibilities, this year's National Welfare Conference was torpid. The conferees seemed sedated by a queer politics of illusion, in which words came to stand for deeds and events—a bad portent for the prospects of liberal reform. While explosive forces keep building, forces that threaten to crack the society, the

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social workers seem unwittingly frozen into alliance with an emerging corporate-welfare imperium.

The country is in a sour, anti-welfare mood and the states are retrenching. Tennessee legislators propose sterilization as a requirement for aid to mothers of more than one child born out of wedlock; and in New York, Governor Rockefeller gets legislation which revives residency requirements, a throwback to the colonial principle of "warning out" newcomers from towns and villages to prevent them from becoming public charges. In April, Congressman Rangel (D., N.Y.) warns that Nixon's Family Assistance Plan (FAP) is a "return to the dark ages"; but while the National Conference is in session, Wilbur Mills, long-time foe of the poor, and now satisfied with his own modifications of Nixon's plan, finally delivers it through the House Ways and Means Committee.

Congressman Rangel has introduced substitute legislation, the Adequate Income Act of 1971 (HR 7257), which provides an income base of $6,500 for a family of four, compared with FAP's $2,400. His bill also eliminates coercive features of the Nixon-Mills plan. Though supported by the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), members of the Black Congressional Caucus, and other house liberals including Bella Abzug, Herman Badillo, Benjamin Rosenthal, William Ryan and Seymour Halpern of New York, Abner Mikva and Melvin Price of Illinois, and Edward Roybal of California, HR 7257 stands little chance of passage. At the same time its proponents believe that a very serious problem will arise if the House is given a choice of the Nixon-Mills bill or nothing at all.

At the Dallas conference, NWRO tries to drum up massive support for Rangel's bill, but the nature and substance of the conference stand in the way. Simulacra of reality seems to dominate the 200 and more sessions—"conceptual models," "standardized frameworks" for analysis, "models of service delivery systems." There are even numerous simulations and games (one, called Welfare Monopoly, intends in its own sanitary fashion to "introduce" conferees to life on welfare budgets!).

Alas, the few sessions that deal with FAP do so at its margins, being concerned for the most part with the care and feeding of the profession and the welfare bureaucracy: What is the outlook for the social services? What manpower needs can be projected? What are the state and national issues in *administering* (so quickly?) FAP? The crucial bread-and-butter issues are not dealt with seriously, and the Welfare Rights people must work outside the orbit of the conference sessions to keep in view such issues as the forced work provisions in FAP, the cutbacks in Medicaid, the fact that 90 per cent of present Aid to Families with Dependent Children recipients may conceivably receive less money than they get now, limitations on appeals and due process for welfare clients.

True, Margaret Berry, executive director of the National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers, gives full support to NWRO's proposals at the opening general session. (So do Governor Gilligan and several other notables at later sessions.) But the rank and file seem willing to settle for little, and they are given a push in that direction by John C. Montgomery, assistant to the secretary and director of Family Assistance Planning, HEW. He praises FAP as the most innovative social legislation in the last thirty-five years. It is, says Montgomery, "a sound and common-sense approach that we can all support at this time." And the illusion of a "foot in the door" on a guaranteed income appeals to many.

Social workers, like too many other reformers, have a history of reflexive pragmatism and a too quick acceptance of "common sense" compromise and step-by-step change, even when programmatic limitations far outweigh the benefits. Compromise goes under the guise of realism—larger, more radical demands for change are "unrealistic." Granted, it is never easy to hold out for more . . . and more . . . , but the effect of *Realpolitik* seems in the long run to be itself a kind of "crackpot realism" which, instead of getting to roots, generates second-order follies that just keep piling up.

Social work's relationship to public assistance makes the point. Year in, year out, since the first federal measures for wide-scale relief in 1935, social workers have administered programs which doled out a pittance, have conducted "social investigations" and eligibility reviews, and all the while been complicit in a brutal system. They have been so not because they were bad people but because they rationalized complicity through their attempts at modest reform. Yet, even these attempts were misplaced. The social workers urged counseling and smaller caseloads so that they could "individualize" their clients. There's nothing wrong with that, so long as people have cash; but without adequate income, the "good things" are locked into a system of charity, thus supporting the popular mythos that economic dependency is a moral problem, not an economic one.

Even as late as 1962, social-work leaders hailed the measly reforms of the Kennedy administration Public Welfare Amendments as a "comprehensive and constructive overhauling" of public assistance. That was bad enough, but worse yet, the leaders promised that if the poor were provided with social services they would go off welfare. The rolls kept rising, but the social-work profession had gotten its "foot in the door" with day-care services. This was probably the most important of the reforms, though more in concept than in substance. Today, nine years later, the number of day-care spaces for the poor is still paltry. The same sort of thing threatens today if the miserly and coercive features of FAP are accepted in exchange for the *principle* of a "guaranteed income" by way of a federal floor under public assistance—a principle which in itself is essentially hollow because the floor turns out to be more a ceiling.

In any case, the National Board of the Conference on Social Welfare would not stake out a position on FAP, and NWRO was in a political bind. Four years of negotiation with the board and staff for funds to enable NWRO members to attend the conference had been fruitless; and NWRO, conserving money for the Congressional fight, could afford to send only a couple of staffers to Dallas. But the victory in Congress will depend on key constituencies being able to influence a large enough liberal swing vote in the House. So NWRO, hoping to put the conference on record and have it commit its organization, pushed for a vote for Rangel's bill in each and every forum session. It was a desperate and tedious strategy, and it was next to impossible to recruit more than a handful

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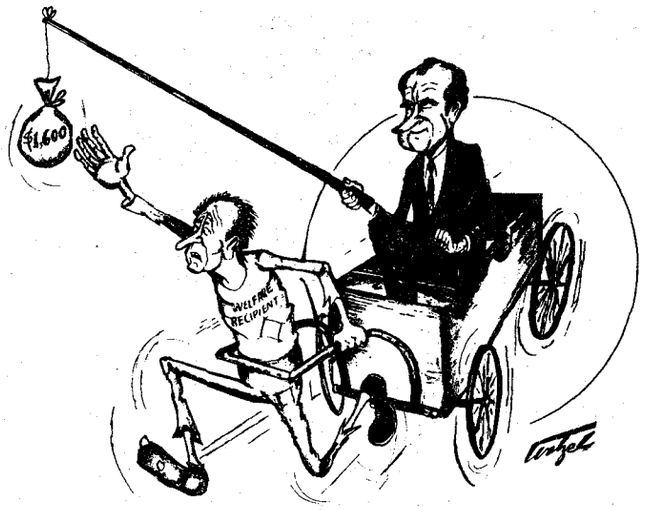
of volunteers to work the 200-odd sessions. The conference could not be persuaded to move beyond talk; even the Social Issues Forum was fenced in by a provision that "the Conference is not responsible for follow-up."

This is the year for dialogue, not confrontation, said Joe Hoffer, executive secretary of the conference. But most of the dialogue was flatulent and the conference theme itself—"Human Aspirations and National Priorities"—was an out-and-out fraud. There was no serious planning for new priorities, no "counter-budget" to fight hunger and poverty, the intolerably high unemployment rates, welfare retrenchments and the rotting cities. The conference was a smorgasbord of stuporous talk sessions; there never was any intention to come out with an agenda of reform for the 1970s. Let there be warning, though: illusion and pretense are dangerous for a nation already too close to the possibility of civil war.

Weary of talk, most of the young, the activists and the radicals stayed away from the forums; groups like the Association of Black Social Workers and the Social Welfare Workers Movement were also absent. The builders of "conceptual models," the technologists, and the missionaries held sway. The Volunteers of America and the Salvation Army invoked images of a bygone era—evangelism, charity and uplift—telling of "spiritual ministry," "charitable movements"; of their trucks which roll across the streets in hundreds of cities picking up discarded clothing, appliances, furniture and other household items—"all to be refurbished and put to essential use by the needy." Programs of "human salvage, too," and the "coins and bills that drop into Santa's chimney" which make possible "Christmas dinners." This in the wealthiest of nations.

But most forbidding of all the trends and developments, and in grotesque contrast to the missionaries—who still at least see people, not "products"—is the New Welfare State, whose lifeblood is its high-powered systems analysis and operations research (gifts from the military) and an emerging technocratic ideology that joins welfare and the modern corporation in social and urban "problem-solving" as extensions of state bureaucracy. Marx never anticipated a Welfare-Industrial Complex, fusing social services, business and government into a "benignly" repressive system of total administration, coordination and control. However, the structure is already forming and the social workers unknowingly abet it.

It began with the "war on poverty" in the mid-1960s, when large defense contractors, anticipating a possible peaking of military expenditures, looked for other growth markets and began to harness their war technology to social therapy. A top executive of Litton Industries, as a member of the task force which planned the "poverty war," proposed that the task of designing and running Job Corps training centers should be given to the large corporations that had designed and managed some of the Defense Department's most complex weapons *systems [sic]*. Sargent Shriver, director of the Peace Corps and then of the Office of Economic Opportunity, concurred, declaring that the "advanced training methods developed by business in shooting wars are needed just as much in this new War on Poverty."



"How To Get a Workhorse"

It was decided that the job centers should be contracted out to business, and soon the waiting list included such giant defense contractors as IT&T, Philco-Ford, Burroughs, AVCO, Litton, of course, and Science Research Associates, a subsidiary of IBM whose president, Thomas Watson, was a member of the Office of Economic Opportunity Business Advisory Council. Before long, the manufacturers of educational hardware and gimmickry—some of the same defense corporations—were siphoning off educational funds intended for the children of the poor. The corporation was becoming coterminous with the government in health, education and welfare, and poverty was subjected to a new mystique of research and development, systems analysis, cost-budget control and mountains of phony studies.

Now in the new corporate-welfare imperium, the social workers too are captives of the language of systems analysis, operations research, and the product-efficiency-management ethos. Ideas of injustice and oppression, the underwriting of private interests which overthrow the public good are smoothed over with technocratic abstractions like "systemic elements interfacing with the social service delivery system." The tyranny of thought is near complete; literally dozens of the conference sessions were monopolized by the clean new imagery—"Delivery of services as a vehicle for prevention . . ."; "human service delivery systems"; "redesigned social service delivery systems"; "modes of service delivery"; "community service delivery system." And to extend the new technocratic ideology, proliferating consulting firms like Exotech Systems, Inc., and Man-Data Corp. peddled the corporate-managerial *Zeitgeist* of clean efficiency to the forum.

Not that there is anything intrinsically wrong with technical rationality. What is wrong is that it cannot set ends and therefore becomes an end in itself, substituting mere technicism for substantive rationality and wisdom. Furthermore, in the hands of the emerging corporate-welfare imperium, technology is used interchangeably to effect either terror or therapy; and it relentlessly advances "managerial welfare," with the result that social services are evaluated not in terms of what is done for persons but of efficiency or the effectiveness for other institutions. Hence, prevention of mental disorder is good because it

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will promote "increased productivity as these prevented problem children grow into manhood."

In the end, and without a flinch, children themselves become a *product*, as in the pamphlet distributed at the conference by no less a prestigious organization than the Child Welfare League of America. Titled "Small Children as a Small Business," the pamphlet is a primer for potential investors in day-care centers. Inside, the text boasts, "Children Are Very Special Products." It is likely that this trend will continue rather than decline, and one should not be surprised when children are no longer referred to as "products" in quotes.

In the New Welfare State, man, the proper subject, will be mere object and product, because the corporate-welfare imperium must construct illusions of reality to prevent people from discovering their natures and the nature of their society. Contradictions must be sanitized, contained or obliterated—because the corporate-welfare imperium cannot build houses for the poor or provide decent health care; it will not redistribute wealth nor feed the hungry. It will, however, extend its dominion through "black capitalism," and day care for profit and a host of other nostrums for "urban problem-solving."

Already the private corporation penetrates government at all levels, interlocking with social welfare, forming policy, influencing decisions, consolidating hegemony. And the problems grow worse. Now the possibility of race war is no longer fantastic.

If the social workers are to break out of their frozen circle of analysis, which grants immunity to the larger repressive whole, they must acknowledge their own torpor and ennui, their pacification in the midst of a cracking society. Sadly, many at the National Conference felt whispers of restlessness and malaise, but could not touch it or give it any name but "boredom." Perhaps forces on the Left, though their capacity for programmatic change is still small, can create enough maneuvering space for change by inventing new organizations, working communally, uncovering possibilities for worker and client collectives, and uncovering the historic possibilities in people's lives by smashing the tyranny of sanitary, harmonious illusion. And the hordes of social workers involved with the poor and hungry, the old and the discarded, the helpless of all ages, may yet discover their collusion with anti-democratic forces. But to do so they will have to adopt a rigorous posture, instead of embracing squishy pragmatism and change-at-the-margins, while the whole becomes more repressive. If they fail in the effort, and given the relentless push to make money out of poverty and urban disintegration, it is at least doubtful that we can generate sufficient *social* capital even to keep pace with our disasters. We remain, after all, the stingiest of all developed nations.

Next year the National Conference on Social Welfare will meet in Anaheim, Calif. Said one black social worker, "That's even more racist than Dallas." And Mrs. Johnnie Tillmon, chairman of the NWRO Executive Committee, summed it up: "It's been dead around here; next year we're going to have to be disruptive." □

GETTING OUR WAY IN VIETNAM

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF WAR

DOUGLAS F. DOWD

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It is as easy to deride those who argue that the United States went into Vietnam for economic reasons as it is to dismiss as naive those who plead that we got in there by miscalculation and will get out as soon as time and circumstance permit. It is considerably more important to know why and how we did enter the lists in Indochina, for that set of actions was part of and consistent with a larger pattern that goes beyond Indochina in both time and space. And perhaps of greatest immediate importance is to understand that as matters *now* stand, the United States does in fact have an already large, and potentially immense, economic stake in getting its way in Indochina. We must come to grips with such matters if we are to assess the meaning and persistence of the war. Nor shall we be able to find the appropriate means to end the war if we mistake the nature of the task.

The United States became formally involved in the Indochinese war no later than 1949, when President Truman lent support there to France, in return for cooperation in the development of NATO—which, implying as it did a strengthened Germany, made the French uneasy. The United States was then indisputably the foremost economic and military power in the world; but our consciousness of the nature and meaning of that role—whether in business, political and military circles, or in the minds of the attentive public—was, by comparison with what we know today, quite limited. Before very long, in the Dulles era, consciousness caught up with fact and, in so doing, expanded and accelerated a process that earlier took place in an almost casual manner—usually in the name of "filling power vacuums." Neither the full range of needs nor all the beckoning possibilities were envisioned, except by a tiny group of steely-eyed and experienced dwellers in the higher reaches of power, men like Acheson and Harriman and Dulles. Their more or less hidden views in the Roosevelt and Truman periods became overt only in the 1950s. In the 1960s they were codified and institutionalized.

Was America's entrance as a major actor in the Indochinese theatre a result of direct economic interests? Not originally. But now, after more than twenty years of

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growing political and military involvement, direct and serious economic interests for Americans and the United States do exist; and if they continue to grow, they will become compelling.

The magnet that pulled us into Indochina under Truman was marked "global strategic concerns"—which, in Southeast Asia, meant especially a concern for restoring stability to Indochina. But involvement is a process, not a condition; and over time the process has meant not only a greater *strategic* importance for success or failure, but, as well, the addition of a strong economic interest. The latter, unless the war ends soon, threatens to overtake the more general concerns that first prompted the relationship with Indochina.

If all that is true, far from preparing to leave Indochina alone, the United States is less likely to do so now than it was five or ten or fifteen years ago. And flowing from that appraisal is a set of probabilities that has already achieved all too much reality: although opposition by Americans to the war has now reached overwhelming proportions, it does not follow that the Nixon Administration will bring the American presence in Indochina to an end. Instead, it will be forced to seek innovative means of camouflaging our intervention there, while isolating and repressing *active* domestic opposition to the continuing operation. Thus it is that American ground casualties are reduced and troops withdrawn, while bombing and shelling have more than doubled under Nixon; and thus it is that Nixon embraces (if a bit stiffly) large demonstrations like those of April 24, while his Attorney General instructs the police and the general public to view the nonviolent disruptions in May as the work of Hitler *Jugend*. Thus it is, as Senator Eagleton has recently discovered, that the American military leaders in Vietnam expect to maintain a residual ground force and a bombing capability for a period of time unspecified.

One must retrace the path of American involvement, then, in order to appreciate why it is that both our military and our economic penetration, and our devastation of the land, the society and the people of Indochina, have increased over the years. Seeing that, we may see also why the political life of the United States itself—echoing and mirroring the deadly struggle in Indochina—becomes ever deadlier. Nixon, Agnew and Mitchell, in such light, are doing their jobs very well indeed.

The story begins much further back in time than I shall penetrate. Suffice it to say that, as William Appleman Williams and others have shown, the American war with Japan stands as eloquent testimony to the long-standing American interest in Asia, an interest which in one form or another goes back to the first decades of our nationality. However, a full examination of the actual and potential resources, markets and investment outlets in Indochina (not Asia) would tell us little about the *initial* involvement of the United States in Indochina, under Truman.

What was decisive for Truman's (and, later, Eisenhower's) moves were three major problems, all requiring that Indochina be kept under Western hegemony.

The first, the French *quid pro quo* with NATO, has been mentioned. The second concerned the Chinese Revolution, and the hopes and fears American policy makers developed in that connection as they dwelt on the prospects for a successful and revolutionary war for independence in Indochina. Whether the domino theory was valid or not, it was taken seriously by those who espoused it; and Indochina was a very wobbly domino.

The third problem was Japan. Very much in our pocket after defeat, Japan was groomed to be a junior partner in the American empire, the Asian bastion of a global system. [See "Capital's Last Frontier" by Jules Henry, *The Nation*, April 25, 1966.] As an industrial power, Japan had to find sources and uses for its industrial strength. Among other things, this meant finding viable alternatives to resuming its historic economic relationships with China. Southeast Asia, although it could not fully satisfy those needs, was an essential condition for their satisfaction. In turn, that meant that Southeast Asia had to be stabilized, and most of all at its hot center: Indochina. (From 1945 on, the other hot spot, the Philippines, had similarly occupied American arms and money, and success had ensued with deceptive ease.)

If the foregoing are put forth as "strategic" rather than as simple "economic" considerations, that is not of course to deny that economic (and economically based ideological) elements are intrinsic to the very existence of a strategy. Still, distinctions are important, and for purposes of knowing where we are and where we are going, must be kept in the forefront of analysis. While holding such distinctions in mind, however, it is equally important to note that the manner in which a process begins is deflected and displaced by the workings out of the process itself. Indochina is a prime example of that phenomenon.

So it was that the political-military side of American involvement in Indochina began quite simply as providing financial and minor political assistance to France—money, reticence mysterious for an anti-colonial power, and support for the ludicrous Bao Dai. By 1952, the United States was supplying the French with more than three-quarters of the money for the Indochinese war. By 1954, Bao Dai was ensconced on the French Riviera, and the French were no longer in Indochina to be supported. Our next step was to become directly involved politically, when we set up the Diem regime. Swiftly, this required political and police advisers and the weapons of terrorism, to render effective a regime that could be sustained in no other way—nor, as it turned out, even in that way. And so American military forces, wearing diverse costumes and labels, began to find themselves in Indochina (not just in Vietnam), in numbers exceeding 20,000 by the time JFK was assassinated—and who knows how many more on the lands and seas surrounding Indochina.

And just as political involvement was increased by an ever deepening military *and* political involvement, so these relationships in turn had an economic element added to them. The economic involvement had two faces, which require separate comment. First, the war, which steadily (and by now, almost totally) disrupted the economies of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (in that order), placed the United States in the position of becoming a growing supplier of not only military stuff but of construction equipment, of industrial (both capital and consumer) goods, of foodstuffs, and of the required and

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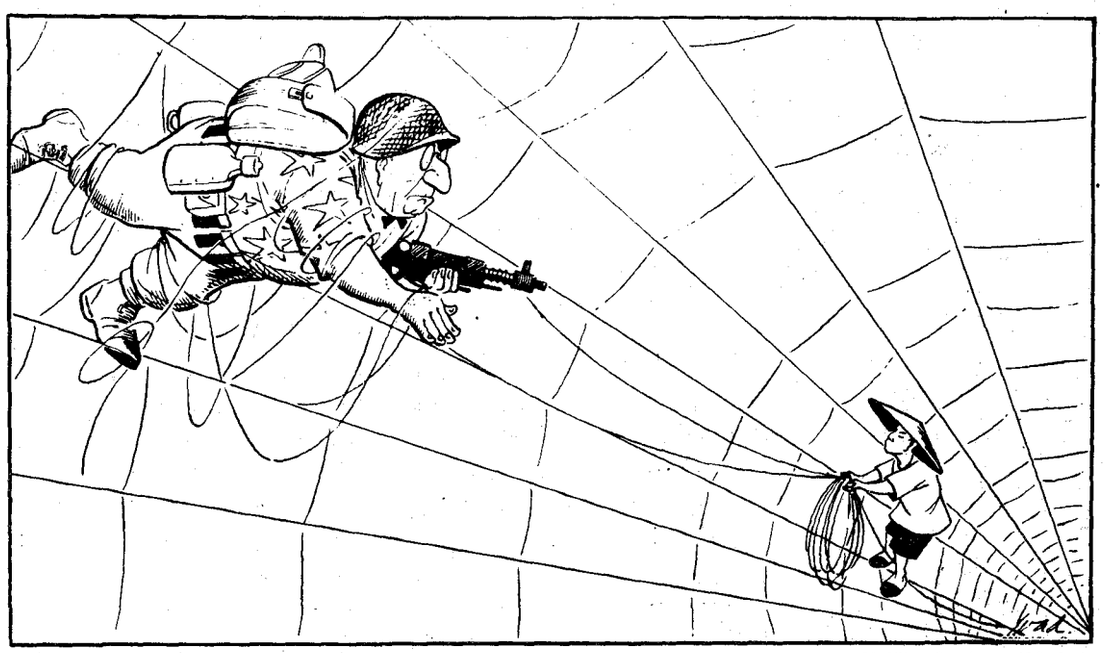
profitable financial apparatus that went along with what has now become an American economy abroad. The Indochinese economies are now thoroughly displaced, disrupted and corrupted, and the peoples of the area provide degraded services for the American needs—services ranging from mercenary soldiers, pimps, prostitutes and black marketeers to obscenely cheap labor for production and consumption. The top layers of the economy, the layers where the large and growing profits roam, are controlled by American and Japanese interests; but, of course, the usual *compradores* in the upper strata of the kept Lao, Cambodian and Vietnamese military and bureaucracy get a fat slice of the action.

The second aspect of our growing economic involvement in and with the Indochinese war overlaps the first, but also has some distinct (and more substantial) meanings. The relationships *in* Indochina entail the subjugation and vicious exploitation of the Indochinese peoples; but there is much that has to do with the American economy as well, and with its position as *the* world power.

In Indochina itself, there were for all practical purposes *no* American economic interests as of, say, 1954. For years we had been much interested in the Philippines and in Indonesia, and more than once we had poked our fingers into the pies of Burma and Malaysia; but not, economically, into Indochina. The French would have put a stop to that, had there been the impulse. What was true in 1954 was likely to remain so for the years just after that time—given one additional matter. That is, when the United States first entered Indochina as an agent, whether to support France or Diem, it was quite generally believed that our efforts would be crowned with swift success; at the start, we foresaw no substantial quantitative involvement of any sort. Indochina was judged to be a strategic piece of geography that could be secured with minor effort, not as an area in which to make substantial economic gains. But soon the process began to be transformed.

In this instance, as in others, once a strong political position was established, other relationships began to multiply. On the most general level, there can be no doubt that the military expenditures made by the Department of Defense from the early 1950s on came to have an ever more stimulating effect on what was a weakly growing domestic economy. That effect came to be quite substantial in the early and mid-sixties; so much so that it became inflationary after 1966—though disguised by Johnson, so as to keep the war disguised. Now we can all see that the economic blessings from the war have been mixed and may on balance even be negative (especially when balance of payments matters are taken into account, as they must be). Still, one would like to know just what would take up the slack if the $15 billion to $30 billion a year for that war were to be cut down significantly.

Less generally, but more to the point, the war began to be a significant and conscious source of gain to particular economic interests in this country. At first that meant the corporations supplying the goods and services of the war itself—construction firms, and firms producing the weapons and equipment and supplies of the American and Vietnamese military. But, as with the spread of the Roman Empire (among others), activity at the frontiers soon came to require and suggest associated commercial, industrial and financial activities. Somewhat later, the area began to promise good returns for investment. (Last month, *The Wall Street Journal* announced that four additional corporations were planning to set up plants in South Vietnam; among these are Coca-Cola and Ford.) By 1966, First National City Bank and Chase Manhattan thought it good sense to set up branches in Saigon. Some years ago, American farmers, and especially rice growers (by which one means corporations, not "farmers") began to depend profitably on exports to South Vietnam—which, once a major rice-exporting region, now imports rice from us. In short, all sectors and functions of the American economy—business, agriculture, industry, commerce, finance, labor and our economic rhythms—now connect somewhat or greatly to our little economy in South Viet-



Vadillo, Ovaciones (Mexico)

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nam; and all have some significant interest in seeing the Saigon regime maintained.

Add all that up, and it probably does not approach a critical point; not just yet. But add in something else that has only now come to light, though its reality goes back a decade: I refer to the offshore oil deposits of Southeast Asia. It is now believed that the long-exploited deposits of Indonesia and Borneo are only a fraction of the oil reserves of the region; and it is now understood that the offshore resources of South Vietnam, and of the whole curve extending east from Burma around through

OFFSHORE OIL SWEEPSTAKES

MICHAEL TANZER
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Is it likely that there are enormous oil fields off the Indochina coast? If so, what if any commitments has the Administration made U.S. oil companies regarding steps to preserve such oil for them?

On the first question there is much speculation, but little hard information, though the oil companies obviously know more than they are telling. It is interesting to note, however, that Standard Oil of New Jersey, which has openly expressed interest in bidding for South Vietnamese offshore oil concessions, last year made a reportedly significant oil find (details of which it refuses to discuss) in Malaysian waters *bordering* the South Vietnamese tracts. But, assuming an inevitable degree of uncertainty until drilling actually begins, the overriding operational question facing the big American oil companies is not, "Will we ultimately find oil down there?" but rather, "If there is a chance of oil being found down there, how do we make sure that our competitors do not get it (be they other independent oil companies or foreign governments)?"

The foundation for the incredible profits of the five huge American companies (Standards of New Jersey and California, Texaco, Mobil and Gulf), which along with Royal Dutch Shell and British Petroleum dominate the international oil industry, is their ownership of enormous quantities of low-cost crude oil all over the world, and particularly in the Middle East, North Africa and Venezuela. In conjunction with their far-flung refining and marketing facilities, the big five's control of this crude oil allows them to sell it at prices far above cost. Their gravest danger is not that they will fail to find large quantities of oil in Indochina but that others might obtain it and use it to depress world oil prices, as well as the big five's profits.

The dangers of Indochinese oil are particularly great for the big five because the logical market for this oil would be Japan, the world's largest oil importer as well as the one that is growing fastest. Since this oil may well be of a low sulfur type, and certainly would enjoy a geographical advantage for the Japanese market, it could easily cancel billions of dollars worth of oil which the big five would otherwise ship to Japan annually, while creating competitive ripples throughout the rest of the world.

To prevent this, the big five would need not only to obtain oil concessions in Indochina but also to have these concessions secured by some form of continuing American military presence in the area, in order to keep in power the concession-granting government. Thus, if the big five get oil leases off the coast of Vietnam they will have a strong incentive to use their historically demonstrated ability to influence policy—in this case toward maintaining the U.S. presence in Vietnam indefinitely. The companies can pursue many avenues of influence, not the least of which is the historically close connection between the State Department and the international oil industry (a connection furthered by a continuing two-way flow of personnel between Washington and the industry).

As of today, however, the extent to which oil prospects are shaping our Indochinese policy—for example, whether the Administration has made promises to the American oil industry to stay in Indochina, or to underwrite any Indochinese oil investment—is a crucial question whose answers cannot be deduced from the outside. What little the Administration has stated thus far sounds disingenuous. Since the American people's blood and treasure would be the entry fee for a shot at the Indochinese oil sweepstakes, they have a right to know all that can be known on the subject.

Particularly at the present time, when according to reporter Paul Cowan, "Bureaucrats who talked freely just a few weeks ago now refuse to be interviewed, even off the record, lest their jobs be jeopardized," a thoroughgoing Congressional investigation is needed. It should elicit testimony not only from State Department officials but from knowledgeable oil company officials who, fortunately, cannot stymie Congress by pleading "executive privilege." Such an investigation might lead to legislation prohibiting this kind of U.S. investment in countries where our troops are fighting, or at least banning government guarantees for investment made under such circumstances, so that these investments cannot in time become a reason for maintaining an American military presence. If ever there was a time and an issue for which the subpoena power could be put to good use, this is it.

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the Gulf of Thailand (which includes offshore Cambodia) and into the South China Sea, constitute an oil pool which, as one petroleum expert has said, make the Louisiana oil resources "look like a postage stamp on an elephant's ass." The elephant's ass has South Vietnam at its strategic center. So it is vividly true that strategy and economics combine into a very precious mix, located in South Vietnam.

Just because of oil? For contemporary economies, and for contemporary warfare—excluding the total nuclear type—no resource runs even a close second to oil as being vital; and in the structure of business power in the world, the oil corporations (and, among them, the Americans) stand at the very peak of power. The major American, European and Japanese oil corporations have already leased a good part of the offshore areas throughout Southeast Asia for exploration and development. The leases for the regions offshore from South Vietnam are to be bid for some time this year, probably this summer. All this takes place when underwater exploration and drilling techniques have just become adequate to the task, when Middle Eastern oil countries have become tough bargainers and when the leading Western powers all anticipate the doubling of their oil needs in the next decade or two.

It all takes place at a time, too, when our presence in Southeast Asia, and most especially in South Vietnam, has come under universal attack. There is no question but that the Nixon Administration is doing what it can to induce American oil companies to take up the eighteen South Vietnamese leases; nor is the welcome from Thieu-Ky anything less than enthusiastic, for both financial and military-political reasons.

The economic promises developed for Americans in Indochina in the past few years and, even more, those of the past two or three and those yet to come, cannot be made good if the United States withdraws from Indochina —for in that case Indochina would not be favorably related to us, least of all as regards oil. So new investments make no sense—unless, unless. . . . Nixon knows he has a better chance to continue his policy of securing a "stable government" in South Vietnam if he can also induce politically powerful corporations to tie themselves even more than they already have to the destiny of South Vietnam. Oil counts heavily in that equation. If Nixon and the oil companies move together on this front, as David Gelber has said (in *Liberation*, Spring 1971), "then we might have to consider the possibility that the war in Indochina has just begun." □

The Bloody Surgery of Pakistan

AIJAZ AHMAD

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After the arbitrary suppression of the East Pakistan rebellion in 1968-69, a resurgence of nationalist sentiment in that Bengali section of the two-part country became inevitable. As I predicted then (See Ahmad: "'Law & Order' in Pakistan," *The Nation*, April 14, 1969), by imposing martial law the ruling military regime was merely buying time; the rebellion would go underground for a couple of years, only to emerge again prepared to fight for the highest stakes. All of that has now come to pass. The best informed correspondents estimate that the genocidal tactics of the West Pakistani army have cost Bengal close to half a million lives. Indian sources, up to now the only sources available, claim that already approximately 3 million refugees have crossed the border, and that thousands more come over each day.

Meanwhile, the movement that started as no more than agitation for autonomy has grown into a struggle for full liberation. Nor is this a Biafra type of minority insurrection; East Pakistan, though the smaller land area, contains the majority of the population—75 million—and these no longer wish to remain in the same state with the rest of the people of Pakistan (they are separated from them, in any case, by 1,000 miles of India. The creation of an independent country, Bangla Desh, has for them become both necessary and inevitable.

In West Pakistan, on the other hand, the economy approaches total collapse. With its foreign exchange reserves falling well below $200 million, Pakistan owes almost $5 billion to its many sponsors. The war in Bengal is costing something like $2 million a day and the disruption of economic life in East Bengal has cut Pakistan's capacity to earn foreign exchange in half. The government has petitioned its Western supporters to advance another $1 billion to enable the country to stay afloat, perhaps for a year. But even if this additional aid were forthcoming, and one doubts that it would be unless formidable strings were attached, it would again be a matter of buying time. As a state, Pakistan is in an irreversible decline, its progressive disintegration caused by the military-bureaucratic character of the ruling groups. Unless, however, a responsible and humane international policy can be formulated and enforced within the next couple of months, the drift of present events will lead to one of the worst Asian tragedies in even this most blood-ridden of centuries.

East Bengal and West Pakistan are estranged from each other by vast differences of geography, language and culture, and the relationship between the two has fallen into the classic colonial pattern: West Pakistan dominates the military and the bureaucracy. East Bengal accounts for less than 16 per cent of the civil service and less than 10 per cent of the army; at the higher levels of military officialdom, it has no representation at all, and that in itself is decisive in a military state such as Pakistan.

In addition, however, all the significant industrial and commercial concerns are governed from West Pakistan;

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Bengal controls, if anything, the subsidiaries. West Pakistan converts Bengali resources to its own profit. According to the official Planning Commission, $2.6 billion worth of Bengali resources were transferred to West Pakistan between 1948-49 and 1968-69. In the same period, according to the same sources, East Bengal produced 50 to 70 per cent of the exports, but received only 25 to 30 per cent of the imports. That this disparity has accelerated during the military government's tenure is also documented by the Planning Commission: in 1959-60, per capita income in West Pakistan was 32 per cent higher than in Bengal; ten years later, this inequality had increased to 61 per cent. The effect of economic exploitation on the development of human resources was also drastic. Between 1947 and 1967, Bengal's percentage of the total student enrollment fell from 80 to 61 for the primary schools, from 53 to 40 for the secondary, from 60 to 49 for the general college and from 70 to 45 for the general university level.

These statistics are mere samples; similar ones could be provided in such other areas as housing, medicine, industrial output, relative price indexes, etc. Thus, starting off in 1947 as the dominant province, with higher educational levels and greater capacity to earn foreign exchange, East Bengal had been reduced by the late 1960s to a semi-colonial status wherein it served as the producer of raw materials for West Pakistan to process and sell, and as a consumer of surplus West Pakistani goods.

It should be kept in mind as well that West Pakistani ruling groups have built their wealth and power at the expense not only of Bengal but also of vast areas of West Pakistan itself. Accordingly, nationalist movements exist within West Pakistan, notably in Baluchistan and in the northwestern home of the Pathans. So, by attempting to suppress the revolutionary struggle in East Bengal, the army acts in the economic interest of the rulers in West Pakistan and at the same time serves a warning on militant groups within West Pakistan.

The relationship between Bengal and West Pakistan has eroded only gradually. Between 1947 and 1958, while the country was still ruled by a succession of civilian coalitions and Bengal enjoyed parity, at least on the parliamentary level, Bengali disaffection was kept in check by the illusion that the disparity in developmental investments and professional recruitment would somehow be repaired. Political means had not yet been fully exhausted, nor were the civil service and the army yet seen as the only powerful groups in the country. However, the failure of the feudal politicians to create representative institutions of some permanence and to solve the central problem of parity between the two provinces placed an extraordinary concentration of power in the hands of the bureaucrats, and the civil service became the first prominent power elite in the country.

During the same period, the introduction of American arms aid threw the entire political culture of Pakistan off balance. Coupled with a fear of neighboring India that had already been entrenched as a national paranoia, the availability of weapons led quickly to a thorough militarization of all facets of national life. Then, in 1958, the army took over directly. Given the almost negligible representation of Bengal in the military and the civil services, Bengali leaders watched the rise of the military-bureaucratic state with great apprehension: the imposition of martial law excluded Bengal from all significant levels of decision-making power. In the preceding parliamentary decade, Bengali leaders had been demanding only parity between the regions—which was, considering Bengal's numerical majority and its superior capability to earn foreign exchange, generous almost to a fault. Now, they began to talk more and more of provincial autonomy. They still hoped that some kind of loose federal structure, giving each section of the country substantive control over its own resources and planning, could resolve the inter-provincial impasse. However, a situation in which Bengal would control its own resources was defined in West Pakistan as secession and a threat to the national interest. The demand was rejected out of hand.

Meanwhile, thanks in part to the way American aid was dispensed, the country's economy took on a monopolistic structure reminiscent of Latin America. By 1968, when the army had been ruling for less than ten years, twenty West Pakistani families controlled 97 per cent of the country's insurance, 80 per cent of the banking and 66 per cent of the industry. Thus, not only was Bengal reduced to semi-colonial status but West Pakistan itself was gripped by a small, cohesive, incredibly powerful group of exploiters. And the army was consuming 60 per cent of the national budget, which meant that, despite a genuine scarcity of capital resources, most of Pakistan's money was unavailable for productive investment.

Then, in the closing months of 1968, uprisings occurred on university campuses and were supported by workers and the lower bourgeoisie. In East Pakistan, the rebels rallied to the six-point program of Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman's Awami League, which was a declaration of Bengali aspirations for autonomy. In West Pakistan, where the Bengali demands were thought seditious, agitation was organized around questions of university reforms, higher salaries for professionals, and the liberal freedoms of press, assembly, etc. There were thus two parallel and simultaneous rebellions, that in the West being of reformist character, whereas the Bengalis in the East were demanding a radical revaluation of the national question itself. However, neither region was prepared for armed struggle, and when the army moved in, resistance evaporated and order was restored, at least on the surface.

Nevertheless, the events of 1968-69 set the basic political character of Pakistan for the years immediately ahead. First of all, the fact that Ayub Khan had to abdicate was a limited victory for the rebellion. Secondly, General Yahya took over with full knowledge that prolonged army rule would be disastrous and was obliged to promise general elections. Thirdly, the dominant political power in both regions became evident: Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman in Bengal and in West Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, former Foreign Minister and leader of the People's Party, were now clearly unbeatable. Finally, it was evident that the politics, even the politicians, of the two regions, were irreconcilable: Mujib and Bhutto had nothing but contempt for each other.

That the elections did take place in Pakistan, that they were not rigged, that within the scope of the electoral possibilities offered them the people were allowed to exer-

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cise free and remarkably well-defined choices—all of that reflects not so much the good will of the ruling junta as the intensity and continuity of public pressure. Sheikh Mujib's Awami League contested elections for the National Assembly on the single issue of regional autonomy and captured all but two of the seats reserved for Bengal, which gave the party a clear majority in the Assembly. In West Pakistan, Bhutto's People's Party also won a comfortable majority. However, the fact that each region was represented by a party that did not contest seats in the other province was further indication of the country's polarization. The two parties were not so much opposed to each other as exclusive of each other, and no common interest joined the regions into a single nation.

Because of its hold on the Assembly, Mujib's Awami League was in a position to frame a constitution guaranteeing regional autonomy. Before the elections, however, the ruling junta had issued a "Legal Framework Ordinance" which made it mandatory that the forthcoming constitution preserve the "integrity" and "unity" of Pakistan. In context, "integrity" simply meant retaining the *status quo*. Effective power was still with the army, which was determined to keep things as they were, whereas the elections had given a clear majority to a party specifically pledged to make basic changes. The result was a deadlock.

The elections were completed by mid-December, and a session of the National Assembly was scheduled for March 3, 1971. On February 15, however, Bhutto, knowing that he had only half as many seats as did Mujib, and therefore no power to determine the character of the constitution, announced, in extraordinary defiance of the mandate given by the Bengali people, that unless Mujib was prepared to compromise in advance on the issue of autonomy, the People's Party would boycott the session. General Yahya quickly postponed the session and declared a crisis. The sensible course would have been to let Bhutto carry out his threat, while the majority party went ahead with the urgent business of forming a government. But Bhutto was in cahoots with the army, and East Bengali nationalists had no choice but to mount a strike that was tantamount to civil disobedience. Consequently, all effective administration of this province of 75 million people passed into the hands of the Awami League; even the provincial Chief Justice refused to administer the oath of office to the new army-appointed Governor. So, after a charade of talks that fooled almost no one, but which gave time for a troop buildup, Yahya ordered the army to take over East Bengal, and ousted all foreign journalists so that the precise details of what was to happen would be hard to determine. The blood-ridden orgy, the homelessness of millions, the hunger and disease of many more millions, the lack of relief and the consequent horrors—all that is well known and need not be repeated here.

Nationalism is obviously the most important issue in Bengal today. However, it has been used to build a mass movement primarily of the urban bourgeoisie, who thus far have not been able to compete with the West Pakistani ruling groups on the terms set by the latter. This bourgeoisie has received active support from the urban working classes, who are often employed by West Pakistani bosses and know themselves to be exploited. The peasant masses, however, are not directly abused by West Pakistanis, but are, on the contrary, sharply aware of exploitation by indigenous entrepreneurs. For the peasant, therefore, the issue is not independence, or even autonomy but social revolution in the countryside. Because there is no effective Socialist movement, the peasant vote has gone along with that of the urban bourgeoisie. But that class, led by the Awami League, has embraced nationalism purely as a way to Bengali control over Bengal's resources—which, given the programs and leadership of the League, means replacing West Pakistani ruling groups with the aspiring urban classes of Bengal. A true emancipation of the peasantry is not on the League's agenda.

Consequently, the Bengali leaders, who must have anticipated the West Pakistani response to the cry for autonomy, did not prepare the peasantry to resist. The masses were used to lend electoral legitimacy to the programs of the urban leaders, but they were not given in return the means to defend themselves against the genocidal tactics of the army. Thus, while excusing in no way the behavior of the West Pakistani ruling classes, one must question the wisdom, even the motives, of the Awami League.

Its leadership had no illusions about the army or the excesses to which it would resort. Under the circumstances, it had a choice between arming the masses or bending to the will of the army just enough to avoid massacre. To have done neither, to have flung an unarmed populace into a predictable inferno, was unforgivable. The illusion was kept up that an autonomous East Bengal, even an independent Bangla Desh could be acquired through negotiations and electoral politics, and without the direct, militant participation of the people. The unpleasant probability is that the peasantry was never prepared for an armed struggle, precisely because to give it that role would have profoundly changed the character of the movement and committed East Bengal to a social revolution in the countryside, instead of mere autonomy with increased leeway for the Bengali middle classes.

The United States, which is not otherwise known for its support of liberation struggles, has been sympathetic to the drive for autonomy, and this benevolence may be related to the national-bourgeois character of the Awami League leadership, as well as to American interests in that area of the world. The twin monopolies over industrial capital and military hardware that give West Pakistan domination in Bengal are the direct results of American aid. During the 1950s, West Pakistan played a significant role in the encirclement of the Soviet Union (it was from Peshawar, an American base in northwest Pakistan, that the notorious U-2 took off). America developed interest in East Bengal only during the 1960s, concurrent with the *détente* with the Soviet Union, the growing American involvement in Indian military affairs subsequent to the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962, and the expansion of America's war in Southeast Asia. This interest is obviously stimulated by East Bengal's proximity to China, Southeast Asia and, of course, India.

Pakistan's foreign policy is largely determined by its ongoing territorial feuds with India. So, when American military aid was made available to India at the time of the

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Sino-Indian conflict, Pakistan retaliated by developing some ties with China—despite the fact that American aid kept flowing into Pakistan as well: it now adds up to almost $5 billion. When, a little later, the United States held itself aloof from the Indo-Pakistani conflict of 1965, suspending military aid to both countries, Pakistan began accepting arms from China. Soon thereafter, the Awami League announced its six-point program. Washington, quite satisfied with the Awami League leadership, let it be known that the more autonomous East Bengal became, the easier it would be for the United States to assist it on separate and more favorable terms. Now that the Nixon Administration has made unmistakable its determination that the United States will continue to be a dominating force in Vietnam, the Americans must be well aware that a friendly, independent Bangla Desh could provide bases from which to bomb or at least intimidate China. From some such calculations, American diplomats have been rather benign toward the Awami League leadership. However, with $5 billion sunk in West Pakistan and the relationship with the West Pakistani capitalist class still flourishing, the United States cannot take a clear-cut pro-Bengali position. One must therefore expect that the United States will continue the ambiguous policy it has been maintaining.

The Chinese, who supported the "unity" of Pakistan and warned against foreign interference, seemed to be taking a pre-emptive position, one that was perhaps determined largely by the U.S. interest in East Bengal. At the time, the struggle for Bangla Desh was led by pro-American groups and there was a real possibility that India, if not America directly, would intervene. The Chinese position was designed, or so it seems, to forestall a pro-Western intervention, and to let the contradiction between the West Pakistani ruling groups and the socially advanced classes of Bengal be resolved through a massacre of the Bengali leadership, producing a revolutionary situation (in Maoist terms) in which the eventual confrontation would be between an occupation army and the progressively armed masses. Then, in the course of a protracted struggle, the leadership of the movement would pass from the urban elite to the peasant guerrillas.

If that interpretation of Chinese motivation is correct—and I cannot be certain that it is—it would seem likely that the position is tentative and subject to change as the character of the struggle changes. Inasmuch as it ignores the sufferings of the Bengalis and does not condemn the brutality of West Pakistani troops, China's attitude is reprehensible; it can be understood, however, within the context of Maoist ideology and the threat the Chinese feel from any disturbance to the balance of power on the subcontinent.

The ongoing problem is as follows: East Bengal has been exploited and brutalized by the ruling groups of West Pakistan. The question of nationalism is therefore altogether valid. However, it is not at all likely that autonomy, or even the creation of an independent Bengali state, could begin to cope with the hunger, the misery, the oppression of the deeply injured Bengalis. One is far from convinced that the urban, middle-class Awami League, now outlawed and gone for the most part underground, can exert the force necessary to achieve not only political independence but a genuine social revolution in the countryside.

So far, the Bengali peasantry has not emerged as a genuinely revolutionary class, in the sense of being conscious of its distinct interests and developing both the leadership and the programs to realize their fulfillment. For the moment, however, the terror practiced by the

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West Pakistani troops has forced a revolutionary potential upon this peasantry. It is likely that the alienation of the rural Bengali is now absolute and that, for a relatively short time, he may be imbued with a will for armed struggle. The same genocidal troop tactics have bestowed a revolutionary aura upon the banished leadership of the Awami League. It is possible, therefore, that the revolutionary peasant mass may accept the League as a revolutionary vanguard. In that case, we may yet see the peasantry fighting for essentially urban, middle-class goals. It can even happen that a Bengali state will be created by the efforts and sacrifices of the peasantry—who will then be ruled by a socially advanced, urban middle class. The question is not whether a Bengali state should come into being; it must. The question is, what sort of state?

Within East Bengal, the cry of secession was first raised by Maulana Bhashani, the perennial peasant leader who, after the tidal wave hit Bengal and the West Pakistani rulers failed to provide even the semblance of adequate relief, demanded independence in November 1970—almost four months before the more moderate leaders of the Awami League got around to escalating their demand beyond autonomy. The factionalism of the Bengali Left, and the superior organization of the Awami League, made it possible for Mujib to steal Bhashani's thunder. In addition, Bhashani made the mistake of boycotting the elections, instead of using them as a sort of referendum on the independence issue. This error gave the Awami League a near consensus and thus an unchallengeable electoral legitimacy.

Now that electoral politics have proved a disaster, Bhashani is likely to regain prestige. He will then surely point out that the elections should never have been taken seriously, that from the start the struggle should have been

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a peasant fight for independence and social revolution in the countryside. Bhashani is almost 90, but still amazingly well. The more radical elements within the Awami League, restrained in the past by the moderate politics of Mujib, are also likely to gather more force and following.

Meanwhile, refugee camps in India, overcrowded with poor, angry peasants, will probably become recruitment centers for a liberation army. As the Bengalis shift from electoral illusions to armed struggle, the composition of the leadership is bound to change drastically. There is already fervent talk of launching guerrilla warfare, but it is unlikely that a strong, coherent, well-trained guerrilla movement capable of effectively confronting West Pakistan's army can arise soon. If it is launched too hurriedly, it can only provoke a new massacre and deepened despair in the Bengali masses.

Some of the Bengali problems may be solved by the bankruptcy and chaos within West Pakistan itself. In the short run, however, the army is likely to step aside in favor of a quisling administration that will have the appearance of civilian rule. With this arrangement made, West Pakistan will probably get enough financing to stave off disintegration. In that case, Bengal will either have to give up its aspirations for independence or prepare for a long struggle.

If the civilian leadership of West Pakistan had had the wisdom to support the drive for Bengal's autonomy and to condemn the army's brutal enterprise, some bridges might still have remained between the two parts of the country. Instead, Bhutto, the self-professed leftist, blessed the army for "doing its duty" to preserve unity "in the name of the country and the Almighty." Bhutto was a loyal servant of Ayub for seven years; he is a feudal landlord with formidable connections among the industrialists. Since entering civilian politics, he has picked up the slogan of "Islamic socialism" (when pressed to define this "socialism" more concretely, he is known to have cited Britain's Wilson and Germany's Brandt as his models). At one point, it looked as though he would be a well-meaning, aristocratic left winger of a Fabian sort, a kind of Nehru. Instead, he has demonstrated a fondness for military solutions and some tendencies toward National Socialism. Under his leadership, West Pakistani civilian politics have drifted as far away from even an understanding of Bengali aspirations as the army has been from the start.

The question of immediate relief is paramount. With 3 million refugees in India and with West Pakistani administrators completely unable to do relief work in a hostile Bengal, it is absurd to evade the problem as an internal affair of Pakistan. A bold and quick intervention by the United Nations is vital. Within East Pakistan, the problem could be solved simply by lifting the ban on the Awami League, suspending army rule, installing government by the legitimate representatives of the people—which is to say an Awami League administration—and letting international agencies do independent relief work without any West Pakistani interference. I doubt if the West Pakistani ruling class can rise to such plain good sense. It will, instead, perpetuate its own rule and let the Bengalis die of hunger and disease. In the process, it will also administer the liquidation of Pakistan as a state. Bengali alienation is already of such a degree that Pakistan seems to be a geographical fiction. Thanks to the greed of the West Pakistani military-bureaucratic establishment, the powerless people of Bengal have no choice but to inherit their own earth. The movement for Bangla Desh now seems irreversible. □

CONGRESS: A FAMILY BUSINESS

JOSEPH VOLZ
Mr. Volz covers Congress for the Washington Daily News.

Washington

After more than a century of prodding, Congress reluctantly passed four years ago a law banning nepotism on the part of its members. Only eighty-two Congressmen were on the House floor in December 1967, preparing to vote on a noncontroversial postal bill, when Rep. Neal Smith (D., Iowa) sprang the surprise amendment. It passed, even though Rep. Melvin Price (D., Ill.), who was presiding at the time and who employs his brother, said that it sounded to him as though the voice vote lost.

The Senate went along with the measure and President Johnson signed it into law; but that has hardly ended the nepotism problem on Capitol Hill. Today, three Senators and twenty-one Congressmen still employ their wives, sisters, brothers, children and in-laws. And another Senator and eight additional Congressmen have prevailed on colleagues to employ their kin.

It's all perfectly legal because the Smith bill contained a grandfather clause that allowed lawmakers, with enough foresight to hire relatives before the law was passed, to keep them on the payroll. And the bill does not forbid farming out the family to other Congressmen.

Despite the law—which supposedly expressed the feeling of Congress—some of the biggest names in Washington, including House Majority Leader Hale Boggs (D., La.), feel the need to keep the family close by. Representative Boggs's wife, Corinne, is paid $13,366 to work in the Congressman's office. The other husband-and-wife teams which work and earn together are: Chet and Vernice Holifield (D., Calif.), Thomas and Alice Abernethy (D., Miss.), George and Esther Miller (D., Calif.), John and Johnnie Deanna Dowdy (D., Tex.), Edward and Anna Patten (D., N.J.) and H. Allen and Elizabeth Smith (R., Calif.).

Some of the legislators, far from being shy about hiring their kin, insist they get more work for less money from the family. Rep. Alvin O'Konski (R., Wis.) told newsmen five years ago that his wife, Veronica, who had worked in the office for a quarter of a century, was "never going to be on the payroll again." But Representative O'Konski has apparently forgotten that intention because she is still

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there, earning $20,100 a year. He says now: "It's handy to have someone who knows all facets of the office."

Rep. Kenneth Gray (D., Ill.) is effusive in praise of his 73-year-old father, whom he pays $18,000 to run the office back home. Representative Gray said that when he first campaigned he actually promised the voters to put his father to work on his staff. The two were partners in a car agency but Representative Gray said he sold it at a $100,000 loss because he wanted to devote full time to Congress.

"My district is larger than New Jersey, Rhode Island and Delaware," said the Congressman, "and I live at my father's house. People come 150 miles to see me and, if I'm not there, wait at the house watching TV. No staff member is going to take that responsibility."

Sen. Milton Young (R., N. Dak.) struggled with the nepotism problem because, "I disapprove of relatives working in the office." He had a painful conflict when he married his long-time secretary two years ago, but solved it in a manner worthy of Solomon: he kept his bride on the job but cut her wage in half.

For a while, Rep. Walter Baring's sister seemed to be mixing church and state quite nicely. An ordained minister, Miss Marjorie Baring ran the Nevada Democrat's home office from her Reno chapel. She later moved the office to the federal building.

Back in the 1950s, Rep. George Shipley (D., Ill.) made headlines by firing his mother, who was his representative in Olney, Ill. The newly elected lawmaker said he had only "hired Mom as a last resort because I didn't have time before coming to Washington to find a suitable person to run my office." He apparently still has trouble getting good, but unrelated, help; his brother-in-law, Don Watson, has been in charge of the Washington office for twelve years and, at $28,967, is probably the highest paid relative on Capitol Hill.

Raymond Price, brother of Rep. Melvin Price of Illinois, must be the hardest working relative—at least if you listen to Price's aides who claim that Raymond "works seven days a week." And if Mr. Price is the most industrious, Mrs. Wyadine Thornton, sister of Rep. Richard Fulton (D., Tenn.), seems to be, at $11,000, one of the most underpaid. Representative Fulton said: "She's as valuable as any two people. The voters appreciate she's there. It's like talking to me. She's my older sister and if she says 'jump', I jump."

Some Congressmen, like James Kee (D., W. Va.), argue that their relatives have particular expertise that makes them invaluable. Representative Kee's daughter, Kirsten Cook, is a $22,753-a-year specialist in the coal miner's disease, black lung.

Other legislators, from Maine to Hawaii, keep their relatives busy. Sen. Margaret Chase Smith pays her brother-in-law, Joseph Bernier, $27,000; the brother of Sen. Hiram Fong (R., Hawaii), receives about the same salary.

The privilege of employing relatives to supplement a Congressman's $42,500 salary is confined to those who were in Congress, with relatives under hire, when the law was passed in 1967, but that does not completely shut off Capitol Hill's payroll to the kin of new Congressmen. For example, Rep. Joel Broyhill (R., Va.), has found work for both of his daughters on the staffs of Sen. Bob Dole (R., Kans.) and Rep. John Buchanan (R., Ala.). And House Administration Committee Chairman Wayne Hays (D., Ohio) put his niece, Suzanne, to work with Rep. John Dent (D., Pa.), one of the men on his committee. Representative Hays wasn't eager to have the news get out, telling an inquisitive reporter: "As chairman of the House Administration Committee, I won't give you the time of day." Among other things, the committee supervises the Capitol press galleries and restaurants. Representative Hays may have been sensitive because his niece used to work for Rep. Samuel Friedel (D., Md.), who preceded Mr. Hays as committee chairman. When Representative Friedel was defeated last November, the remaining members of the committee tried unsuccessfully to create a new $28,000-a-year post for him.

Some legislators, like the powerful Rep. Jamie Whitten (D., Miss.), have found places for their relatives on the committees to which they have been appointed. Mr. Whitten is a ranking member of the House Appropriations Committee which has employed his sister, Mary Smallwood.

When Representative Smith pushed through his nepotism bill—he was particularly interested in stopping the placement of relatives in Iowa post offices—he predicted that the law was sure to help restore public confidence in Congress. As things have worked out, it hasn't made a striking contribution to that goal. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Ventriloquist and the Doll

CRAZY SUNDAYS: F. Scott Fitzgerald in Hollywood. *By Aaron Latham. The Viking Press. 308 pp. $7.95.*

WILLIAM HUGHES
Mr. Hughes, until recently a Humanist Fellow of the National Endowment for the Humanities, teaches at Essex Community College in Baltimore, and is the editor of a forthcoming book, Pictures in Our Heads: The Movies in American Life.

For twenty-five years the *auteur* theory, in various guises and at many levels of sophistication, has dominated film study. Put simply, this notion, maintained by critics ranging from André Bazin to Andrew Sarris, has it that the director is the true author of a film. Regardless of who wrote the screenplay, or who did the camera work, or the sets, or the acting, a film reflects the artistic personality of the director. Nonbelievers, who had only logic on their side, contended that filmmaking, in Hollywood, is a collective enterprise involving the work of many people—all of whom help to shape the final product. Of late, the challengers of the auteurists have been encouraged by signs of a revival of interest in the role of the screen writer. Among these developments are the recent publication of Dalton Trumbo's letters and Jay Martin's impressively researched study of the career of Nathanael West. More recently the editors of *Film Comment* devoted an entire issue to studies of "The Hollywood Screenwriter," and Pauline Kael intensified the debate with her iconoclastic *New Yorker* series on the making of *Citizen Kane*, in which she attributed the original conception of the film, and much of its tone and character, to the writer, Herman J. Mankiewicz, rather than to the director, Orson Welles. Now we are offered a book-length account of F. Scott Fitzgerald's experience as a script writer. It is perhaps a measure of our fascination with the Fitzgerald persona that, while one of the least successful screen writers, he should be the subject of the most extensive study.

It is not altogether inappropriate that Fitzgerald ended up in Hollywood. His fascination with wealth and glamour, "the romance of money," was reflected in his lifelong interest in the movies. His own pursuit of success took Fitzgerald to Hollywood on three occasions. In 1927 he went West to work on the photoplay for *Lipstick*, a melodramatic vehicle for Constance Talmadge, which was never produced. He returned in 1931 to do *Red-Headed Woman* for M-G-M. Forced to collaborate with a lesser writer, Marcel de Sano, Fitzgerald proved to be extremely quarrelsome, the script was a failure, and he lost his job. He returned again in July 1937, chastened by a series of personal and literary failures, determined to save himself as a writer and recapture his lost fame. He remained in Hollywood, except for a few visits East, until his death in 1940.

On this last tour of duty Fitzgerald had a lucrative contract with M-G-M ($1,250 per week), where he worked briefly on *A Yank at Oxford*, collaborated with E. E. Paramore on *Three Comrades* (only to see the script drastically revised by Joseph Mankiewicz, the producer), and prepared a Joan Crawford film, *Infidelity*, which was dropped because of censorship problems. In addition, he worked briefly on *The Women* and *Madame Curie* before he was discharged by the studio in January 1939. Forced to free-lance, Fitzgerald was signed almost immediately by David Selznick to polish the script for *Gone With the Wind*, but he was fired when George Cukor and Selznick became dissatisfied with his work. This job was followed by a disastrous assignment to work on *Winter Carnival* for Walter Wanger. Fitzgerald and Budd Schulberg, his collaborator, were directed to go to New Hampshire to prepare the script, but Fitzgerald went on a drinking binge which began on the plane and continued through a reception at Dartmouth. Fitzgerald was fired on the spot by Wanger and ended up in a New York hospital, drunk and sick with pneumonia. This episode (recounted in Schulberg's novel, *The Disenchanted*) undoubtedly hurt Fitzgerald's reputation in Hollywood, but he did manage to land scattered assignments on *Air Raid* (for M-G-M), *Raffles* (for Goldwyn), and two abortive projects at Twentieth Century Fox, *Brooklyn Bridge* (overlooked by Latham) and an adaptation of Emlyn Williams' *The Light of Heart*, later released as *Life Begins at 8:30*, with script by Nunnally Johnson. He also managed to sell to an independent producer the film rights to *Babylon Revisited*, with an additional payment promised if Fitzgerald could supply an acceptable adaptation. He prepared a script, entitled *Cosmopolitan*, which was rejected—although the film was finally made in 1954 from a new script, as *The Last Time I Saw Paris*. For his efforts in Hollywood Fitzgerald earned only one screen credit, for *Three Comrades*, and even that film appears to owe more to Mankiewicz than to Fitzgerald.

Despite his failure as a screen writer, Fitzgerald's movie experience deserves careful study because it provided the raw material for some of his best fiction, particularly *The Last Tycoon* and several short stories, including "Crazy Sunday." Unfortunately, this account, written by a reporter for *The Washington Post*, contributes little to our understanding of Fitzgerald's Hollywood years. Aside from descriptions of Fitzgerald's screenplays, weakened by forced analogies to his literary works, and gossip gathered from interviews, there is little here that is not familiar to anyone who has read Trumbull's biography, Fitzgerald's letters, or Henry Dan Piper's critical study—which is very informative on Fitzgerald's work in Hollywood.

As the title suggests, Latham chooses to make "Crazy Sunday," Fitzgerald's fictional account of a Hollywood writer, the key to understanding his subject. Written in 1932, just after Fitzgerald's first dismissal from M-G-M, "Crazy Sunday" is narrated by Joel Coles, a hard-working young continuity writer with a slight drinking problem, but "not yet broken by Hollywood." Despite his enthusiasm and inexperience, Joel is acutely aware of the uncertainties of film work: "Everybody's afraid, aren't they? . . . Everybody watches for everybody else's blunders, or tries to make sure they're with people that'll do them credit." Invited to a Sunday afternoon party at the home of Miles Calman and his wife (loosely modeled after Irving Thalberg and Norma Shearer), the writer is determined not to discredit himself before the producer, who is known to despise alcoholics. In an episode similar to one experienced by Fitzgerald at the Thalbergs', Coles, after too many drinks, decides to entertain the party, and fails miserably:

> . . . as he finished he had the sickening feeling that he had made a fool of himself in view of an important section of the picture world, upon whose favor depended his career. . . . He felt the undercurrent of derision. . . . It was the resentment of the professional

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> toward the amateur, toward the stranger, the thumbs down of the clan.

Making this incident central to his narrative, Latham draws a portrait of the author as an outsider, a man unsure of himself in unfamiliar surroundings, labeled a drunk, misused and misunderstood by Hollywood.

By now it is commonplace to view Fitzgerald's life through his fiction. It is undeniable that Fitzgerald often found material for his work in episodes from his own life. Nevertheless, as Robert Sklar has noted in his study of the novelist, "Nothing has encouraged distorted interpretations of Fitzgerald's life and art more than the temptation to treat his art and life as if they could be interchanged."

It is regrettable that Mr. Latham did not resist that temptation. Consequently, he offers us a confused amalgam of fact and fiction, devoid of critical intelligence and human understanding. Having decided on his method, the author allows no character or incident to be introduced without reference to one of Fitzgerald's fictions. For example, when Fitzgerald and Zelda attend a party at the home of Carmel Myers, we are told: "Graciously, she guided the newcomers from celebrity to celebrity the way Jay Gatsby guided Tom and Daisy when they came to his party." This sample is typical of what Latham's publisher calls "combining biography with literary criticism."

Often this approach leads to harmless, but amusing, inanities. Describing a scene from *Infidelity* in which the wife serves her husband some ham "sent up from the South," Latham insists on adding: "One cannot help wondering if Zelda, reared near Montgomery, Alabama, ever had ham sent up from the South." More often, however, this approach causes the author to miss the point of his own evidence. Thus when Fitzgerald remarks (in a letter to his daughter), "You don't realize that what I'm doing here is the last tired effort of a man who once did something finer and better," Latham, instead of examining Fitzgerald's image of himself at this point in his career, laboriously tries to relate the letter to *The Women*: "It is almost as though Fitzgerald had gotten his daughter confused with one of the characters in the screenplay which he was writing." It is Latham who is confused. In concocting one more "might-have-been," Latham overlooks one of Fitzgerald's few candid assessments of his film work.

If Latham had made a serious effort to explain the novelist's failure as a screen writer he might have made a contribution to our understanding of both Fitzgerald and Hollywood. But here, too, the author's narrative mode appears to have restricted the scope of his research. There is no evidence that Latham has read Hortense Powdermaker's *Hollywood: The Dream Factory*, or Leo Rosten's *Hollywood*, both of which include perceptive sociological analyses of the place of the writer in the movie world. Nor does he appear to have weighed Fitzgerald's experiences against those of more successful screen writers like Raymond Chandler or Ben Hecht. Although Latham seldom confronts this problem directly, the tone of his narrative suggests that Fitzgerald failed as a screen writer primarily because his personality and literary background made him an outsider in Hollywood, with its assembly-line production methods and its stables of writers. In this connection, he presents a portrait of a sensitive, talented, but confused artist, out of his element but always superior to the Hollywood system. Now, Fitzgerald was dismissed shortly after the studio rejected his script for *Red-Headed Woman*. Although allowing for the possibility that Fitzgerald had lost his job because he had turned in a bad script, Latham adds: "But he more than likely lost it not for his performance as a writer but for his performance as a performer," referring to "Crazy Sundays" and the novelist's behavior at the Thalbergs'. The trouble with this explanation is that Fitzgerald's bad scripts outnumbered his bad performances, although there were plenty of both. Moreover, there is considerable evidence that the Hollywood system could tolerate deviant behavior from screen writers, or, for that matter, from anyone, so long as they could contribute to the success of a production. Pauline Kael's account of the career of Herman Mankiewicz offers numerous examples of misadventures which were overlooked simply because Mankiewicz could turn out good screenplays. Fitzgerald was not a victim of the Hollywood system, and his was not the familiar story of the artist who refuses to sell out and suffers for his scruples. The system, for all its faults, has proved flexible enough to include hacks and hustlers, as well as skillful writers, like the Mankiewicz brothers, Ben Hecht and Dalton Trumbo, and even literary figures like Faulkner and Huxley, all of whom were able to perform successfully within the limitations imposed on screen writers. And Latham's evidence indicates that Fitzgerald was perfectly willing to accept these conditions, to settle for mere commercial success, as he had done generally with his short stories.

Nor was Fitzgerald's failure due to any diminishment of his talents. *The Last Tycoon* and the quality of his letters during this period show that he retained considerable powers. Fitzgerald's problem was that his talents as a novelist were of little use in writing screenplays. Fitzgerald consistently refused to recognize this. After being fired by Selznick he wrote his agent: "I think that Dave is probably under the impression that I am a novelist first and can't get the idea as to what pictures are about." The evidence appears to confirm Selznick's judgment.

As a novelist Fitzgerald had shaped his skills and habits of mind into a distinctly personal literary style capable of both wonder and irony, and embodying a vision of the fascinating blend of vulgarity and idealism that constitutes the American dream. These same qualities enabled him to absorb and refine his Hollywood experience into an exceptional novel, but they did not contribute to his screen-writing career. In those years, when the studios were run by self-made men and sons of immigrants, the movies tended to provide a simple, but entertaining, ratification of the American way. Thus, in writing screenplays, Fitzgerald was unable to make use of the distinctive vision with which he had infused his best novels. But, more fundamentally, he lacked those skills, particularly of timing, movement, and simple, direct plot construction, which were so essential to successful screen writing in that period. This judgment is affirmed by Henry Dan Piper's critical study of the writer. Piper, who read the scripts, concluded that none of Fitzgerald's screenplays is "distinguished, or of more than routine interest." Of *Cosmopolitan*, which Latham regards as a "great original," Piper says:

> The truth is that Fitzgerald's screen adaptation of "Babylon Revisited" was not especially good. In his attempt to stretch an excellent magazine story into a ninety-minute film, he cheapened and padded it almost beyond recognition.

Fitzgerald, contrary to the myth, wasn't too good for Hollywood; he just didn't have the particular talents necessary for success there. Although he was critical of most of the people who dominated the industry, and unhappy with what had been accomplished by the medium, Fitzgerald respected its artistic possibilities. He desperately wanted to be a good screen writer, and had hopes of becoming a director. It is one of the tragedies of his later years that he struggled so hard, and with a certain unexpected nobility, to develop a talent he never had. For that reason it is a disservice to Fitzgerald, in telling the story of those years, to fall back on clichés and myths—particularly those originating with Fitzgerald himself.

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On occasion Latham seems to perceive, if only vaguely, that there is an important dimension of meaning that is missing from his account. But in failing to come to grips with the essential problem confronted by Fitzgerald, the crucial differences between writing novels and writing screenplays, Latham deprives his book of both focus and significance. His misapprehension of the essential nature of his subject calls to mind one of Fitzgerald's notes for *The Last Tycoon*:

> People in the East pretend to be interested in how pictures are made, but if you actually tell them anything, you find they are interested in Colbert's clothes or Gable's private life. They never see the ventriloquist for the doll. Even the intellectuals, who ought to know better, like to hear about the pretensions, extravagancies and vulgarities —tell them pictures have a private grammar, like politics or automobile production, and watch the blank look come into their faces. □

Personae of the Critic

COMMON AND UNCOMMON MASKS. *By Richard Gilman. Random House. 321 pp. $8.95.*

FOSTER HIRSCH
Mr. Hirsch has written for Commonweal, The New Leader *and* The New York Times, *and is at work on a book on the plays of George Kelly.*

With the publication of *Common and Uncommon Masks,* Richard Gilman establishes himself as the legitimate heir to a small, distinguished tradition in American letters: this collection of writings on theatre from 1961 to 1970 certifies him as a genuine critic of the drama. As a critic, he is an antidote to the reviewers who write in the newspapers and mass-circulation magazines. Like Eric Bentley and Robert Brustein, Gilman is a critic-teacher who challenges our preconceptions about the nature and function of art, and who enlarges our perceptions by telling us what we don't already know.

Gilman acknowledges Bentley as one of the principal influences on his thinking and writing about theatre, but Brustein's work is more closely allied to his own criticism in spirit and scope. His collection, in fact, could be alternately entitled *Seasons of Discontent* or *The Third Theatre* (the suggestive titles of Brustein's two collections of criticism). Like Brustein, he is profoundly discontented with the state of the theatre in America, with the hit or flop mentality of Broadway and the crowd-pleasing gestures of commercial playwrights and producers. And Gilman, too, is looking for an alternative to Broadway and Off-Broadway, a third theatre which would provide the irreverence and audacity absent from most commercial theatre.

But he parts company with Brustein in suggesting the direction to be taken by this third theatre. Brustein's orientation has become increasingly political; his latest collection of essays, *Revolution as Theatre*, which touches on theatre only tangentially, reflects his absorption in the political moment. Gilman, on the other hand, believes that history and art occupy two distinct realms (this firmly held doctrine accounts for the title of his 1969 collection of essays, *The Confusion of Realms*). His central tenet is that the function of art is not to reflect life but rather to transcend the merely realistic by audacious imagination, to transmute life as we know it, and as the naturalistic theatre bequeaths it to us, into "masks of uncommon vision."

Unlike Brustein, then, Gilman isn't particularly concerned with the place of the theatre in society; he is not as interested as Brustein in the theatre's possible service to the community; he doesn't have Brustein's passion for causes; he doesn't finally, care as much as Brustein cares about the kinds of lives we live outside the theatre. Gilman feels that we should not turn to drama for moral instruction or for political statement. His recurring dictum is that drama should properly occupy itself with what cannot be said better in another form.

Gilman's concern with the possibilities of dramatic form, and his belief in the separation between art and society, are his special contribution to current dramatic criticism. At this time, when so much criticism approaches art in terms of the *Zeitgeist,* it is refreshing to have in Gilman an observer who denies the issue of "relevance." I think he overworks the theme of the confusion of realms in order to be provocative and to seize our attention, but his position is nonetheless a stimulating corrective to prevailing notions of art as a political weapon or a social force.

The collection concludes appropriately with his splendid essay on Grotowski. His approval of Grotowski's methods is the logical consequence of his own dissatisfaction with the safe, contained, naturalistic theatre. To Gilman, Grotowski's apocalyptic vision signals a revolution of feeling and form—for he is attracted to the new and the radical as a refuge from conventionality, though he is not seduced by faddishness or radical chic. His discussions of Grotowski's Polish Lab Theatre and of The Living Theatre are quite free of the cultist adulation which has so often been accorded the work of these groups. And Gilman recognizes that it is the playwright, rather than the director or the actors, who will effect the truest and deepest revolutions in theatrical sensibility: ultimately, it is through explorations into new ways of using language that the theatre will revive itself.

Gilman's interest in drama as literature reflects his own particular critical strength. Though he suggests in his introduction that one of his preoccupations is with "the problem of acting," and though he greatly admires Grotowski's innovations in this sphere, his primary concern is really with dramatic literature. Unlike Stark Young, America's greatest critic of the art of acting, he does not dwell on the actors' personalities nor does he give detailed, evocative descriptions of performances. His accounts of acting and directing are astute, but rather cramped: it is the playwright's work which most engages him.

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Like James Agee, who wrote film reviews for both *The Nation* and *Time*, Gilman, who wrote for *Commonweal* and *Newsweek* (but not simultaneously), had to design his reviews for two different kinds of audiences. At *Newsweek*, he felt he had to hold himself in, and understandably enough, most of the reviews reprinted here are selected from the ones he wrote for *Commonweal*. (His selection, in fact, is too selective—there isn't enough of Gilman confronting the purely commercial theatre. On the basis of this collection, the reader would think the New York theatre season consisted of classical revivals interspersed with Albee, Pinter, Arden and Williams.) Gilman's writing for *Commonweal* and *Newsweek* does not show the marked difference in quality which distinguishes Agee's fine work for *The Nation* from his superficial quips for *Time*, but there *are* subtle differences. His *Newsweek* pieces are thinner, less theoretical, less expansive. Even so, I regret that he stopped writing for *Newsweek* because we need his kind of criticism in the mass-circulation journals.

Nevertheless I can understand why Gilman left *Newsweek* and stopped writing drama criticism in general. Like Bentley and Brustein, he was distressed by the sameness of the product he was compelled to comment on. They all found that there was a point of diminishing returns in reporting on formula musicals and domestic comedies. It is appropriate that Gilman is now directing and teaching playwriting at Yale, where he has the opportunity to test his theories and to influence potential dramatists.

Ranging as it does over broad areas of modern thought and writing (Susan Sontag, Mailer, McLuhan, Black writing, The Living Theatre), *The Confusion of Realms* is of larger scope than *Common and Uncommon Masks*. The long essay gives Gilman more room to flex his critical muscles. As an example of the good use to which he can put a more ample format, no essay in his new book is quite as spectacular, in either style or substance, as his long piece on Ibsen and Strindberg in which he contends that Ibsen's experiments with form were more unsettling to audiences than his moral heterodoxy. □

The Poetry of Margaret Atwood

PROCEDURES FOR UNDERGROUND. *Atlantic-Little, Brown. 79 pp. $4.75. Paper $1.95.*

THE JOURNALS OF SUSANNA MOODIE. *Oxford University Press. 64 pp. Paper $1.95.*

THE ANIMALS IN THAT COUNTRY. *Atlantic-Little, Brown. 69 pp. $4.75. Paper $1.95.*

THE CIRCLE GAME. *House of Anansi (Toronto). 80 pp. Paper $1.95.*

ROSELLEN BROWN
Miss Brown's book of poems, Some Deaths in the Delta, *was recently issued by the University of Massachusetts Press.*

I have just had an experience that reminded me why I write poetry. I was sitting in my kitchen this afternoon, talking with a girl just turned 17, who is very excited because she has dared to touch with one toe the undiscovered country of poetry. She is still at the point where she blushes a little and turns her eyes down, as though from a suitor, when she asks if she really has any "talent," if her efforts are worth her time, my time. And she has read almost nothing.

In the course of our discussion, we talked about the problem of the uncertain poet trying for Significance, and his unwillingness to condescend to the pettiness of concrete imagery. She said, "Well, there are a lot of things in my life I don't know how to handle in a poem yet, I mean concretely. So they come out abstract—pain, disillusionment, fear of the future. I don't know how to get the details in."

And I had one of those blinding teaching epiphanies that seem so banal later but nevertheless can sear an idea into a student's hide. She doesn't know anything about *dreams* in poems—about lying and straight-faced exaggeration, about twisting and wrenching and substituting one level of reality for another. She thinks she has to make sworn statements, maybe heighten the language a little, souped-up verbs, clever earnest adjectives, but say it as it is, as honestly as possible, must *name* the feeling it gives her or leave it out altogether if she can't, for any reason, including libel, discuss it.

What I did at this point was run to get my Margaret Atwood. I said, here is someone who writes simple sentences just like you, no knotty syntax, no obscure allusions, no filigree of beautiful sound even, and here's how she puts the details of her life in a poem. "Midwinter, Presolstice" (this is in her newest book, *Procedures for Underground*) begins with the most matter-of-fact, bleak winter's tale: "The cold rises around/our house, the wind/drives through the walls in splinters" and so on, spending "the days quietly/trying to be warm. . . ." Then, abruptly but not out of keeping with the flat tone, she begins to dream "of departures, meetings, repeated weddings with a stranger . . ." and then:

All night my gentle husband
sits alone in the corner
of a gray arena, guarding
a paper bag
which holds
turnips and apples and my
head, the eyes closed

In "Three Desk Objects" (a random choice; the book is a Pandora's box of dreams and nightmares) she describes her electric typewriter, her clock, her lamp:

My cool machines
resting there so familiar
so hard and perfect

I am afraid to touch you
I think you will cry out in pain

I think you will be warm, like skin.

One of my favorite poems is "Game After Supper." Again, in the language of a casual speaker (neither studiedly stark, say Mark Strand as Kafka, nor studiedly pared down to Creeley notation—but in transparent language) she begins a story: "This is before electricity, /it is when there were porches/ . . . soon /the woman will light the kerosene lamp." (So, backward in time.) After more faintly depressed description, the apples rotting in the orchard:

I am hiding in the long grass
with my two dead cousins,
the membrane grown already
across their throats.

Foward in time?! She is looking back, it is the real sequence of memory, simultaneous, through the dark filter of all that was to overtake her; these children are not dead yet but the terror of all she knows of their lives hangs above them like a sack ready to cover their faces.

We hear crickets and our own hearts
close to our ears;
though we giggle, we are afraid.

From the shadows around
the corner of the house
a tall man is coming to find us;

He will be an uncle,
if we are lucky.

This is an effect she uses in other poems. The opening poem of her first book, *The Circle Game* (1966), is immediately shocking:

The photograph was taken
the day after I drowned.

I am in the lake, in the center
of the picture, just under the surface.

Margaret Atwood's world is full of

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stone and water, and animals everywhere. (Her book-before-last is called *The Animals in That Country*.) It is a primitive vision. The animals are totems; they are our grandfathers. They are ourselves. Things pass from one form to another easily; they are all still being shaped and reshaped and it is her own vision that does the transforming.

I learned that the earliest language
was not our syntax of chained pebbles

but liquid, made
by the first tribes, the fish
people.

She even names one poem "A Soul, Geologically." In "Procedures for Underground," the title poem, she talks of an Orphean, or more humanly, a Lazarus-like descent, advising us how to "look for tunnels, animal/burrows or the cave in the sea/guarded by the stone man." Afterward, "if you live," you will be charged with the mystery and evil power of the people you have moved among. Everything wavers, nothing is stable—it is all (my friend said it) exactly the kind of world we dream, where you rely on the solidity of an object or a face at your peril; where you are usually, if not always, running from a vague but fatal threat; where you seem to be facing things head-on, but those things have come dressed as something else. These metamorphoses are in effect her subjects. They are not mixed metaphors.

I had reached for Margaret Atwood, not for Sylvia Plath. It was not a question of quality. It is simply that I find the Atwood poems absolutely exemplary (which doesn't mean flawless) as the testimony of a woman who bears with her that curse of the underground but who appears to be very rational: "We talk about this in calm voices/sitting at the kitchen table." And thus, unlike Plath, she can be heard not as the urgent voice from the edge of the edges, the ultimate extremity, but as a haunted, quietly, not at all brutally, functioning woman. She really does intend to come back from the sinister caves of her vision; she lives here and only visits there. With Plath it was always the other way around. Atwood's voice is low, the world does not assault her (thus she is not strident in self-defense) so much as it sways and melts and comes back together differently, the animal or geological origins of some familiar thing uncovered for an instant. She is much too reticent to confess, she airs no very particular angers.

Her earliest book, *The Circle Game*, is somewhat more domestic, there are more tangled "relationships" in it than in her latest, and many of the poems can be read with the slightly narrowed eyes

REVIEW OF NATIONAL LITERATURES

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of those who like to seek "feminist" or at least "feminine" poems.

Right now
my skin is a sack of
clever tricks, five
senses ribboned like birth-
day presents unravel
in a torn web around me

and a man dances
in my kitchen, moving
like a metronome
with hopes of staying
for breakfast in the half-empty
bottle in his pocket

And:

You came easily into my house
and without being asked
washed the dirty dishes,

because you don't find
my forms of chaos,
inverted midnights
and crusted plates,
congenial:

restoring some kind of
daily normal order.

Not normal for me:

I live in a house where
beautiful clean dishes
aren't important

enough

The poems are full of insights but the anger is muted and not really confessional. As she has moved into her later work, the world has begun to appear so strange that it is hardly the place to bring indictments.

A Canadian, educated in Toronto (and at Radcliffe), Margaret Atwood has also written a few fine poems in search of a Canadian identity, which, like her poems that speak out of the coils of difficult love affairs or marriage, are hardly the stuff of which "nationalist" poetry is made. She is trying to grasp an essence elusive as water. (It's an interesting fate, to be a Canadian, for someone who feels the shape of the world so soft and malleable, too readily taking on fresh imprints, from within and from without. That sounds very much like a description of Canadian destiny by one of its critics.) There is a poem in *The Animals in That Country* called "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer" in which it all comes together as the most logical preoccupation for her: the man who stood in unbounded space, the open land, and shouted Let me out!, who, stamping, watched his foot "sink/down through stone/up to the knee," and finally went mad, lost without a definition of order, of chaos. She has, in fact, written a book called *The Journals of Susanna Moodie** presenting the imaginary meditations of an actual Canadian pioneer, a woman who has brought the strengths and limitations of an English upbringing to the near nothingness of the Canadian wild. The poems are done in Atwood's familiar, orderly manner and language with no attempt at Berryman's Mistress Bradstreet tour de force of accuracy—or was that fancy? There are some very beautiful lines in these poems ("at the last/judgement we will all be trees") but they make so much sense as a fit subject for Miss Atwood's attention that the mystery of her other poems, the perpetual surprise of some undreamed-of transformation, is missing.

I know very little about Miss Atwood's life. In any case it is her subcutaneous, underground, underwater life that speaks to me, so quietly. In a reticent essay in the current issue of *Field*, she refuses even to engage her subject, "Poetic Process," head-on. "Poetry is dangerous," she ventures. "Talking too much about it, like naming your gods, brings bad luck."

But passing the procedures for underground from hand to hand left me feeling like a relay runner who's passed on the torch. My friend went home with all my Atwoods in her satchel, in fact a shade too delighted at her discovery of a possible way into herself and her poems. I hope she understood what it meant to be carrying fire. □

*She has also published a novel (*The Edible Woman*), an engaging, somewhat mundane story about the misuse of women which culminates, like a poem, in a powerful metaphor just astonishing enough to change our perspective on all that has so casually preceded it.

Dreiser's Enduring Genius

GEORGE H. DOUGLAS
Mr. Douglas teaches English at the University of Illinois, Urbana.

August 27, 1971 will be the 100th anniversary of the birth of Theodore Dreiser. Doubtless the occasion will be little noted by the countrymen he strove so long to understand, but that hardly matters. For while it is true that Dreiser never commanded a large public in his lifetime, and indeed has no large following today, those who were moved by him were greatly moved, and he can still safely be regarded as one of the greatest American novelists of this century. But if this is so, why is it so? What is it that makes Dreiser so eminent among 20th-century American writers? Certainly, in spite of misguided recent attempts to glorify his style, we shall have to say that for style we had better stick to James, Fitzgerald and Hemingway. Dreiser's gift lies elsewhere. Unless we are attuned to the kind of experience he struggled for so many years to express, we will be as blind to it as were the New Humanists in 1915, when their neat moral universe seemed to be threatened by the kind of life Dreiser was describing.

What, then, was the genius of Dreiser? It was that he was able to capture, as no one before or since, the spirit of American urban life in the 20th century. He moved upon this phenomenon like some antediluvian monster, devouring whole what he encountered. He was never a philosopher of American experience—whenever Dreiser turned to philosophy the result was abysmal—but he had lived with America so long and so fully that he portrayed it in a way that social-science tracts could scarcely hope to improve upon.

America has had other writers of this sort—geniuses often without honor, sometimes scorned for their vulgar tastes, but who nevertheless have managed to penetrate the heart of the American people. James Fenimore Cooper, for example, dealt in a not dissimilar way with American life in the early 19th century, and, like Dreiser, was thanked for it by having his crudities and "literary offenses" exhibited for all to see. Yet Cooper made a frontal attack on the social life of his day and managed to encompass all of it. With a ponderous and sometimes irascible effort of the imagination he was able to describe in detail the crumbling of the old republican America: the despoiling of the landscape, the fading of agrarian and manor-house life, the laying away of knee breeches and tiewig, the coming of the land agents and "small potato lawyers," the growing dominance of the large financial centers, and the decay of the individual spirit.

Dreiser was able to do much the same for the post-Civil War industrial America. He knew as no one else what it was to be adrift in a world too vast and too complex for an individual to control or even understand; he knew what it meant to be the son of an immigrant in a foreign land, to be a country boy impelled toward the city and exposed to a world of dreams that could never possibly be fulfilled. He knew what it was to be unemployed. He knew what it was to live

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in a world where established social institutions count for little, where the old sources of value—family, church, friendship, the moral order—are no longer strong enough to sustain one. And Dreiser knew this American feeling of estrangement at all levels of society, not merely as it affected the urban poor. To be sure, as Alfred Kazin pointed out years ago, Dreiser was not a reformer in the manner of the genteel muckrakers who were doing their most important work in the early and highly fruitful years of Dreiser's productivity. Dreiser held no brief for socialism or agrarian Populism, and his political infatuations —such as for communism in his later years—always had something of the grotesque and comical about them. "Dreiser would neither tinker with that society nor reject it," said Kazin. "It was the only society he knew, the only society he had been allowed to understand; it was rooted in the same rock with poverty, mischance and valor." Still, although Dreiser was mainly an oracle through which 20th-century America spoke, although he never contributed anything remotely like an "ideal of American society," he was very much a part of the humanitarian spirit of the century; he was instrumental in setting the stage for it, helped to indicate its direction, and gave it a great deal of its raw material. Dreiser contributed superbly in the way that a writer can—he brought focus, vision, articulation to the only world he knew, and luckily for us the world he knew was a large one.

And it was to a great degree the largeness of his world that establishes Dreiser's genius as a writer. Many of our novelists who won for themselves great popularity and considerable financial reward now seem tame beside Dreiser. In spite of his great popularity in the twenties, Sinclair Lewis, to take an example, no longer grips us as a recorder of American customs. We now take his attempt to fire off a shot at every specimen of *Boobus americanus* that crossed his line of vision as an unproductive form of art and as a base form of truth. Lewis' method of taking the mores of America item by item ("stalking red Indians," T. K. Whipple once called it) proved in the end to be fragmentary and disjointed. And so it was with Fitzgerald and Hemingway: their visions may well have been pure and precious, but they were specialized, and largely, too, their possessors were defectors from American life. Dreiser never defected and he never had it in him to be specialized: he was completely inundated with the large truths he knew and he had no impulse to purify his art.

Which is not to say that Dreiser was no artist. He was one of our best. A large vision implies a certain complexity, and an essential part of Dreiser's greatness is the subtlety, the multifariousness, the dense stratification of his artistic constructions. Indeed his power as a writer of tragedy makes him more than a folk artist, and places him among the European masters of tragedy. For it is not true that Dreiser had only one story to tell, that of the poor wretch struggling against social and economic forces too powerful for his drive and ambition to overcome. Dreiser not only gave us the tragedy of Hurstwood and Clyde Griffiths but others equally significant—for example, the stories of Carrie, Jennie Gerhardt and Frank Cowperwood. These, too, are American tragedies. What is involved in them is a deep feeling for the widest possible ranges of alienation in American life—even when one is not thrown down, even when one rides to the top. Interestingly enough in this connection, many critics believe *Jennie Gerhardt* to be Dreiser's best work, and indeed it is a tragic vision of the highest order. H. L. Mencken, who wrote some of his best critical pieces on Dreiser, was of this opinion. He likened the work, in its leanness, "stark simplicity," compactness, "reverential seriousness," to the best work of Hardy, Moore, Zola and Tolstoy.

We tend to think of Dreiser today as being inextricably bound up with the first three decades of the 20th century.

SELFISH GATHERING

Delia Longacre fell asleep, letting
her long hair just touch moonlight
like a bow laid on shining strings.
She went to sleep
with no sense of surrender, suddenly
not there. She breathed
a long time without images,
the languor of her body
unimpelled and swelling pleasantly
to the mons veneris in the arch
of unconsciousness.
She turned, her head
completely open to the moon.
Three men and a woman were walking
along some dusty rows of potatoes—no, it was corn—
and stopped at a row end. It seemed
as if they were talking
about something that had to do with hunting,
with keeping hunters off their land.
Dust
swirled around their heads
and she, or some part of her,
was at a table
where appropriations—long printed estimates—
were being raised and lowered
like blinds at windows
and there was a sound of anger. Windows
full of fire opened and closed,
and she was at a different gathering.
Heads of state,
presidents, prime ministers, chairmen, leaders, a few remaining
kings, shahs, and supreme highnesses,
were saying,
"Why don't we get together to stop war,
settle everything peacefully. All of us
would have twice as much as we have now."
All voted
to try to find a way
to do it.

Millen Brand

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But in this we are mistaken. Dreiser survives for us today precisely because we still live in the world he so richly revealed. It is true that our social structure has been somewhat modified. Perhaps the cruel edge of Dreiser's world has been blunted somewhat; perhaps we can say that the rawest manifestations of the old capitalist order have passed away—and much of Dreiser's writing was aimed at the pathos and heartlessness of that era. But still he continues to live for us because we are still a people very much like the one Dreiser portrayed; the world he gave us is still very much our own, and to get to the heart of it we can scarcely do better than return to his work. □

The Comestible Muse

FRUITS & VEGETABLES. *By Erica Jong. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 86 pp. $5.95. Paper $2.95.*

JOSEPHINE HENDIN
Mrs. Hendin teaches current fiction at the New School for Social Research. She is the author of The World of Flannery O'Connor.

"The first poem in the world is *I want to eat.*" Apples, onions and artichokes are breasts for the "hungry poet [who] can never be content with two," who craves a totally edible universe. *Fruits & Vegetables* is a feast of images, an astonishing feed of poems succulent and sour. They range from tales of magical fruits, to poems of adolescence and excursions into the difficulties of being a woman and a poet. But Mrs. Jong is best at erotic *gourmandise*. She has a gift for describing the gleam of an apple or the look of an onion as though she were describing human bodies.

Men enter apples in these poems, incorporate with them so well that you wonder whether they are humanized plants or botanized humans. Erica Jong's fruits are people; her vegetables can be artists. Her onion is one of those introspective poets that goes on "flaying itself away, layer on layer, in search of its heart which is simply another region of skin, but deeper & greener. . . . Then I think of despair when the onion searches its soul & finds only its various skins." Like the statues of potato and rutabaga in Richard Brautigan's *In Watermelon Sugar,* Erica Jong's vegetables are monuments.

Mrs. Jong couples flesh and fruit in a way that makes each funny and enticing. But at the end of laughter, she can hit you with the sadness of human plants, or onion people without a heart. Fruit people touch, penetrate one another's orifices, but no one tears the flimsiest membrane of self, or eats his way to knowledge of another's consciousness. Not in plants nor in animals is there any generative core, any sense of the workings of creation, of feeling or belief. Fruits and lovers, vegetables and poets seem to spring out full-grown in a psychic supermarket where they are always on display, where they sample one another and examine themselves for bruises in between. Like the avocado plant cultivated to sprout "gaudy leaves" but never bear fruit, Erica Jong's poems are sensuous evocations of the gaudiness, the showiness of *us*—and grim reminders that life can be a barren game of show with nothing to tell, a spectacle without a future. There is nothing but skin to her poetic onion, no soul to know, nothing to say of its vegetable *Angst*. But the involutions of its skin and the odor of its juices are a happening for the senses. And like the sexual union of Mrs. Jong's knight in armor with a very iron maiden, life can be an event of great erotic interest, a clanging erotic curio.

Erica Jong is a brilliant poet of analogies, who makes the vibrations of the senses a force that binds us together. *Fruits & Vegetables* manages to be bawdy and sad, eloquent about the variety and emptiness of life. It makes you feel that people are appetites, doomed to be in hot pursuit of sensation, to remain, as Wallace Stevens put it, forever "nibbling at the sugared void." □

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FILMS

ROBERT HATCH

In his prologue to *The Clowns,* Federico Fellini tells us that, as a small boy in an Italian provincial town, he was captivated and terrified by the clowns of a circus that pitched its tent just below his bedroom window. Subsequently, he began to see the eccentrics and grotesques of his neighborhood (the neighborhood seemed to have its full share of them) as tanbark zanies. Now he offers a nostalgic tribute to that comic tradition.

Fellini's responsiveness to clowns and clowning has been apparent in his previous work, particularly in those pictures, *La Strada, Nights of Cabiria, Juliet of the Spirits,* that were built around his wife, Giulietta Masina—herself an instinctive and most appealing clown—but also in such others as *I Vitelloni* and *8½*. It demonstrates a faith in the indestructibility of the utterly vulnerable, a kind of idealism of human survival against the odds. There are seeds of sentimentality and excess in the notion, and Fellini has never particularly shied from either; but there is also rigor in it: the clown is never extinguished, true enough, but he is ever on the brink of extinction. What a destiny!

So now Fellini brings a brilliant, historic company of clowns into the ring and focuses the resources of his research and sympathy upon them. He is a wonderfully evocative film maker and it should be a magic film. It repeatedly promises to become so, but in the end it has not. Somehow, when Fellini confronts the clowns directly, they evade him. Of course, they are on hand in great numbers and presented in the most intense and appreciative detail; but the exhilaration, the feeling of identity, the miracle of a past really recaptured—these promises are not fulfilled. The picture keeps losing momentum, letting you escape.

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I think part of the trouble may be that "clown" has become a metaphor, something that happens to a concept only when its actuality is beyond recall. We all know, or think we know, what the clown quality is in human behavior, but the reconstruction of clowning itself seems much less than what we have in mind. Masina, it is obvious, has a clown's heart; it makes us love her and fear for her. But these veritable clowns—forever banging one another on the head with huge, weightless mallets, dueling one another with jets of water, snatching stools from under one another's bottoms, falling in every conceivable attitude of inconsequential agony—are they what the word means to us? Are they amusing; can one extract any instruction from their antics without becoming patronizing and pretentious? Like witches and centaurs, Trojans and the Borgia family, clowns are part of our heritage; I doubt that they can any longer be part of our direct experience.

And further, it seems to me that Fellini erred by making his film in the form of a documentary on the process of film making. This device, which inevitably involves a pretense of spontaneity, a false intimacy, always puts me on guard. I suppose that Fellini used it here to proclaim his very personal involvement in the subject matter. Also, he needed an integrating narrative, and the material and personages he could bring together were sadly fragmentary. But the effect, too often, was to upstage the very people he was bent on celebrating. When he goes to visit old clowns, surrounded by the clippings and posters of their fame, still game to sketch the outlines of their once witty dexterity, attention flows toward the director, his camera and production crew, crowding the scene. Particularly with clowns, it was a dubious idea. They are fragile; Fellini is dominating. They are finished; he is in his prime. Fellini making a picture about clowns is something quite different from a Fellini picture about clowns. I doubt that—so late—he could have made the latter; I am not glad that he went ahead with the former. There are instants of flashing and cheeky good humor in the film, but overall, it has a vaultlike chill.

Bored and stifled by Visconti's *Death in Venice*, I went back to Mann's famous original. The disillusion, I fear, begins there. The basic trouble is that, as a formidable man of letters, revered and honored by the entire German nation, Aschenbach is not credible. Despite much laborious, Teutonic hair-splitting on the nature and responsibilities of genius, Mann's protagonist shapes up as a self-regarding prig, concerned above everything with keeping his public image intact. Of course, subsequent events in Venice suggest that he had good reason to groom that image, but what cannot be swallowed is that such a man wrote books that impressed themselves on the intelligence of his day.

And then there is the matter of Tadzio, that Polish vision of loveliness who is the old man's nemesis. He is very much in the nemesis business, posing and peering over his shoulder in the most ludicrously provocative way. Mann summons up the whole personnel of classical Greece to endow the infatuation with some substance, but the image of Socrates and Phaedrus lying under the shady willows and discoursing on virtue and desire will not transfer dignity to the mascaraed Aschenbach skulking after the idle, women-cosseted boy. And a degree of dignity is essential, for Mann purports to be narrating tragedy, not a horror story, and you must believe in Aschenbach's worth to grieve for him.

One way to assay *Death in Venice* is to visualize it, and that is the service Visconti performs. It must be said that he does the story no favors. Dirk Bogarde, as Aschenbach, is by turns foxy, exhausted, waspish and lascivious; he never suggests even the memory of substance. He runs through a narrow, repetitious repertory of mannerisms and movements—back and forth to the beach, in and out of the dining room, forever peering from behind pillars and curtains and pressing his temples. It is tour de force acting to the point of stultification, and it is not really Bogarde's fault. The action of *Death in Venice* goes on in Aschenbach's befuddled head, and, except by grimacing, there is little an actor can do to command that stage.

For Tadzio, Visconti has found Bjorn Andresen, a young Swede who does indeed possess a Leonardo head. Unfortunately, he is a boy utterly devoid of theatrical talent, or even good sense, who wears that head as though he were Bottom under enchantment, and who performs with a literal obedience to direction that makes you squirm. I'm not sure that even a good young actor could have done much better—unless by showing himself a quite unremarkable youth, faintly puzzled by the old man's obsessive leering. But that would not meet the needs of Mann's raptures.

There may, in its day, have been enough shock in *Death in Venice* to raise it above banality, but now the notion that a weary old man loses his lifelong struggle against homosexuality in the enervating atmosphere of a poisonous Venetian summer seems clinical data. Dressing it up with paragraphs of philosophical and literary effusion is only depressing. Visconti has taken great pains to reconstruct the period, and has faithfully animated Mann's passages of portent and allegory, but the result is waxen. □

THEATRE

HAROLD CLURMAN

London

At Harold Pinter's new play, *Old Times*, given by the Royal Shakespeare Company, I was reminded of a quip: one man asks another, "Have you seen *Last Year in Marienbad*?" The other answers, "Perhaps."

Meticulously written, with an odd lucidity in which every speech is shiningly clear and at the same time, in its context, bewilderingly ambiguous, *Old Times* suggests (it never says) that the past is a kind of palimpsest, so that one's memories overlay one another and one can't be sure which of them really happened and which are in fact dreams.

However, there is more to the play than that rather familiar proposition. The

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mind in which events are chiefly recalled is that of a man tortured by sexual apprehensions which he cannot resolve because his recollections as to what occurred or may have occurred twenty years ago are troubled by contradictory testimony from his wife and from her long absent friend, now living in Sicily and come to visit the couple in a quiet English village by the sea. At first he appears to know nothing of the visiting friend (she is called Anna), but later he says that he had stared at and presumably desired her when they sat opposite each other in a London pub in the bygone days. Anna does not refute this; indeed, she affirms that she knew him, remembers him well.

The foregoing is complicated by puzzling corroboration followed by contrary evidence. Husband and wife had met for the first time at an old movie, *Odd Man Out*, and he was immediately attracted by her. Anna professes to have met the man's wife at another showing of the same picture. (Were they all there together? It is possible but by no means certain.) What disturbs the man is that the friendship between Anna and his wife was so uniquely intimate that he somehow feels shut out, excluded, by their mutual reminiscences of the days and nights of their former companionship. He even suspects that their relationship may have been something more than girlhood camaraderie. They say nothing to allay his jealous fears. Perhaps his troubled state in this regard—hurt and anger—stems from a sense that he is or was sexually aroused by both women and thus in some way frustrated by both.

I am not positive I have all these twists right and, to a certain extent, it hardly matters. The main point is how difficult it is to recapture old times and how evanescent is the substance of reality. And since so much experience is centered in sexual longing, our lives tend to move toward a never fulfilled yearning for the satisfaction of some true knowledge, a confirmed consciousness of what life has been to us, an unequivocal grasp of its meaning. However, all that is left to us are imprecise but haunting "old time" melodies, songs that linger in the air.

Is it so? For Pinter it is. Subtle craftsman, shrewd dramatist, he builds his plays as metaphysical melodrama, their ambivalences fostering suspense. Nor does he omit the irony and surprising comedy of the situations he posits. With all this, Pinter remains a master of contemporary theatre writing with something more than a "manner"; he is no mere trickster or aesthetic tease.

Having acknowledged that much, I must extend my review with a few subjective notations or statements of personal prejudices. My tastes veer toward a less ascetic art. I favor fullness; I enjoy rich surfaces, greater body, broader canvases. Hence my attachment to Shakespeare, and among novelists my preferences are Dickens, Balzac, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky. These men lived in more spacious epochs. We have "conquered" space and have become dismally constricted. Each of the artists mentioned above was in one way or another also a moralist, but their creations were founded in flesh and the boundless miracles of action amid a world of color. Perhaps there is no help for it, but I am discomfited by the bleakness of so much of the "modern." Why, I ask myself, must our own art be so sedulously "minimal"?

There are too many things around us and we are overwhelmed. We move too rapidly, cover too much ground, rest very little. We find it difficult to cope with the environment. Serious artists experience a tendency to withdraw from the external tumult, to make ever more abstract graphs of reality, to dwell within themselves.

In drama, Ibsen occupies a middle point between the prodigality of the "old" and the narrowness of the "new." With Pirandello, we arrive at the desperate skepticism of our age. We can no longer be sure of anything—not even for the hell or the fun of it. Certainty eludes us. We are in a grotesque dreamland. Shakespeare, toward the end of his career, seems to have arrived at a similar state, but how much more ample, colorful, zestful the journey. Now the stage of our insights and perspectives has shrunk: we have become very small. This, as I say, may have been inevitable, but should we take pride in it?

To return to Pinter's *Old Times*: it is called his first "full-length play" since *The Homecoming*, though it runs only eighty minutes. Directed by Peter Hall, the production of the Royal Shakespeare Company is especially fine. Like the text itself John Bury's sets and lighting are spare and yet utterly telling of place, time and atmosphere. Their simplicity and neatness are somehow eerie, chilly in the sense they create of vacancy and isolation.

The acting is beautifully precise, with an edge of cruelty and pain. It seems perfect in its verbal and intellectual articulation: its form completely conveys Pinter's essence. Vivian Merchant as Anna, Dorothy Tutin as the wife, and Colin Blakely as the husband not only express the play but seem to contain it in its incisiveness, its own kind of elegance and its brilliant mystery.

For all my alienation from the Pinteresque "landscape," I nevertheless admire *Old Times* for the probity of its delineation, the authenticity in the projection of an individual vision—which is part of the truth of our day. The play will be produced in New York before long, where, I venture to say, its press reception will not be as wholly enthusiastic as it has been here.

In a later piece I shall have something more to say about the theatre of the moment here in London. I feel bound to note without further delay that if you come to this city within the next few weeks you should not fail to see Paul Scofield in *The Captain from Kopenick*, a comedy by Carl Zuckmayer, written in the 1920s, produced now at the National Theatre. It is a most winning play and Scofield's performance in it is capital. □

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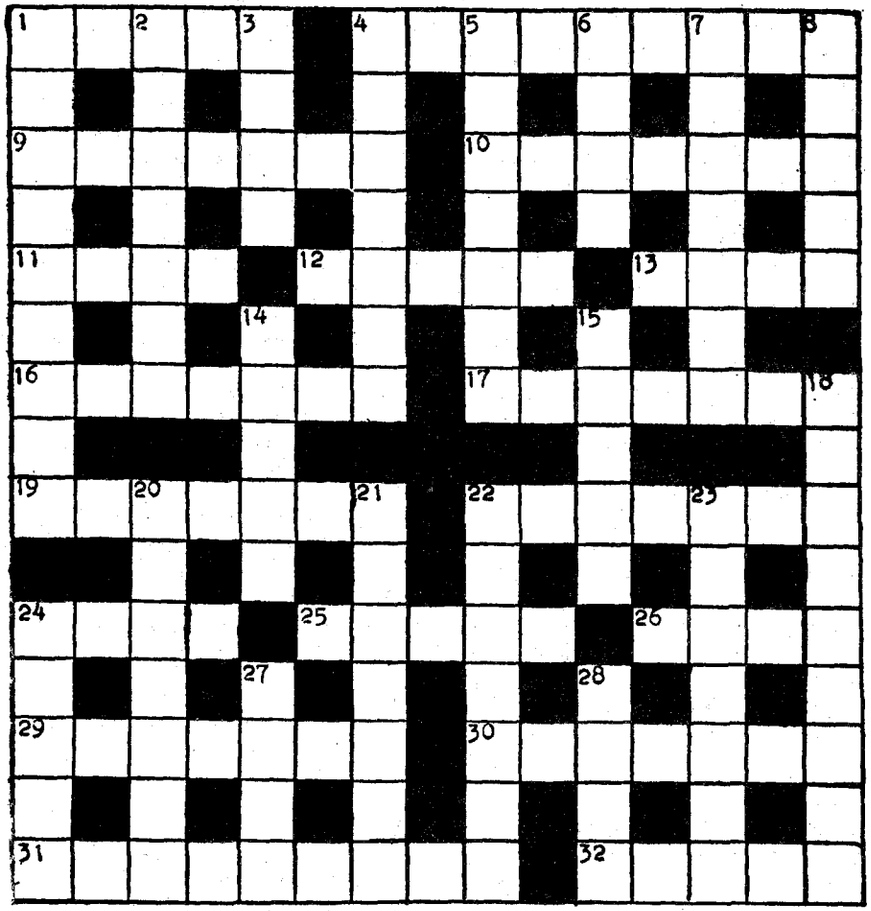

ACROSS

1 and 6 down Might be a little sad with some singers, but good if your work is flagging. (9)
4 Knocked down like Jack Horner, sleeping? (9)
9 Country song about people. (7)
0 You could make it out of all but the tail of the mountain bird. (7)
1 and 26 Find the 24 across and 13? (8)
2 Ships that are not necessarily anchored fast? (5)
5 The sort of units that go from point to point in succession. (2,5)
7 A blow she confused with wraps? (7)
9 Sailor-to-sailor's get-together, with foreign hosts. (7)
2 Come in to something meekly? (7)
4 and 13 The far-from-serious aspect of turning the 11-26? (4,4)
5 and 5 down Landlords for large sections of the city? Capital might exemplify them! (5,7)
9 It certainly isn't a worse one that helps.
0 One's old broken dish? (7)
The bird seems to be telling Tom to get up. (9)
2 Looks sound for possible home locations! (5)

DOWN

1 Sounds as though the directors' action is the basis for figuring the scope of the platform! (5,4)
2 Takes at least one domino off. (7)
3 and 28 down Sol's potential winnings might affect communications. (8)
4 Such 5 necessitate a certain amount of feeling. (7)
5 See 25 across.
7 His plum might indicate the clumsy type. (7)
8 Two or forty on each side? (5)
14 Leaves all wrapped up, perhaps, for postprandial pleasure according to some.
15 A hasp unhinged might still be official. (5)
18 Swift representative of such? (9)
20 What's the purpose in a tear—to get fancy clothes? (7)
21 Not exactly 3-28, rather sunny spots. (7)
23 Little flower? (7)
24 and 22 Is it sincere to make someone very angry, and then have some gum to offer? (12)
27 At least the case should have its good points. (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1399

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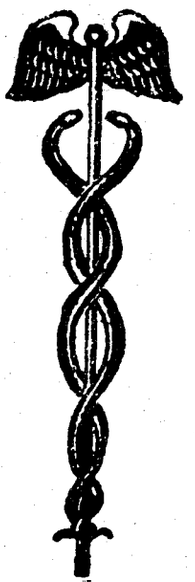

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